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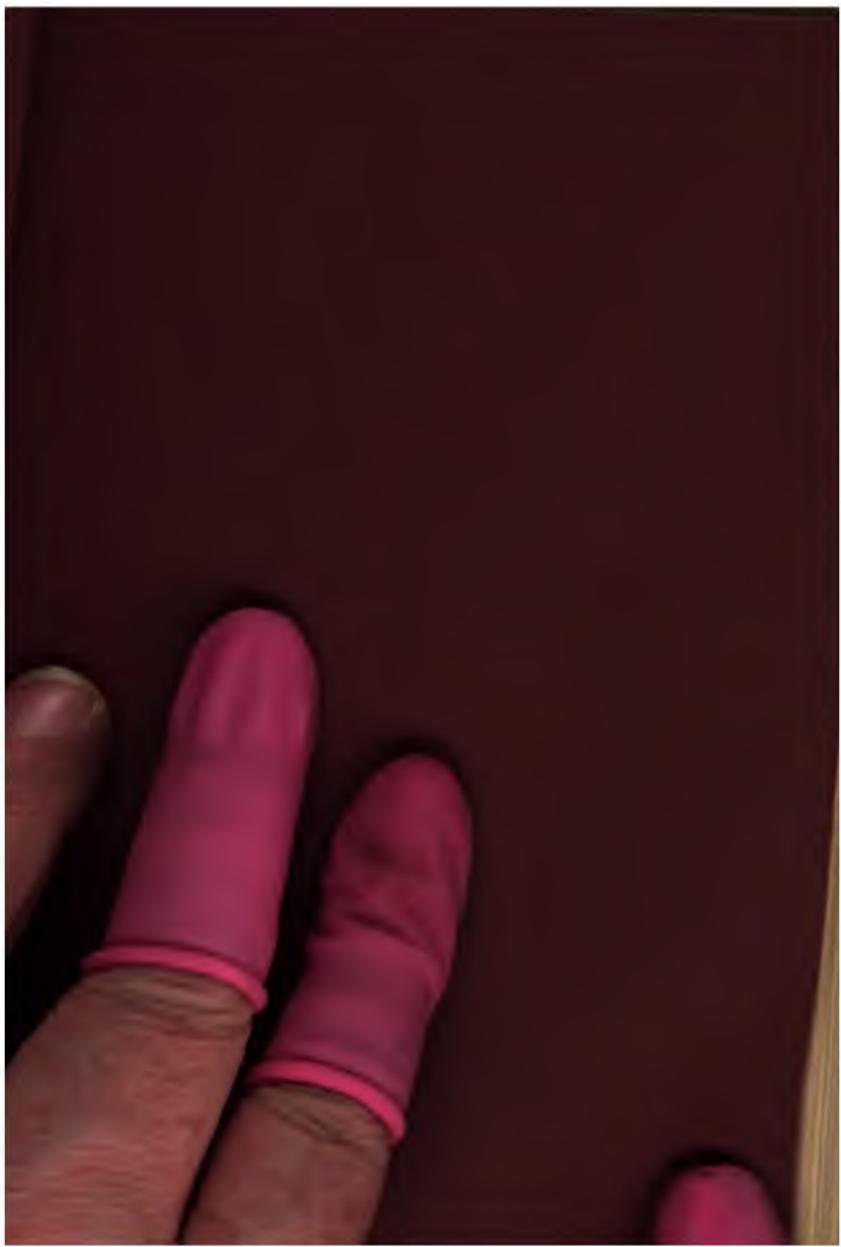
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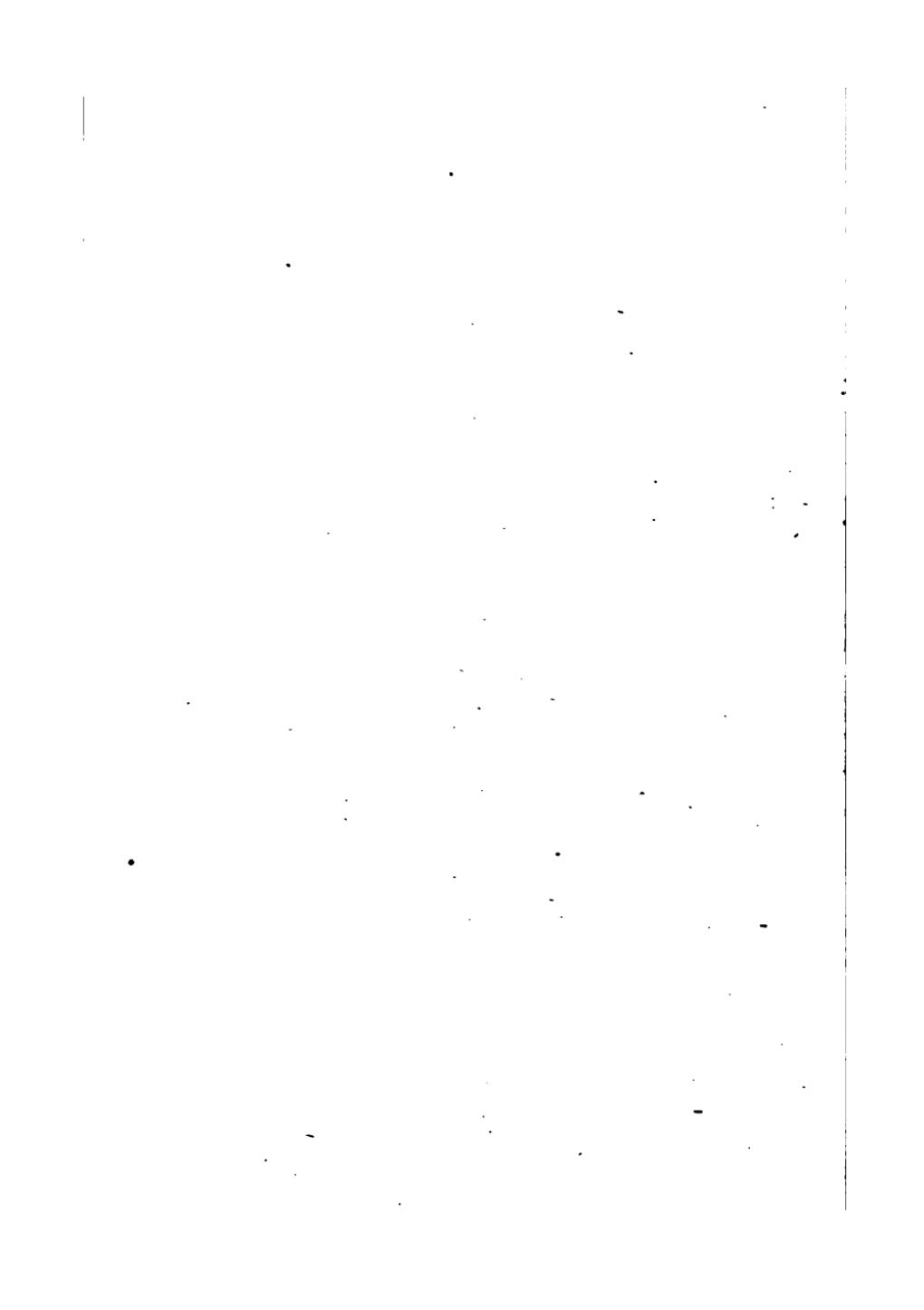


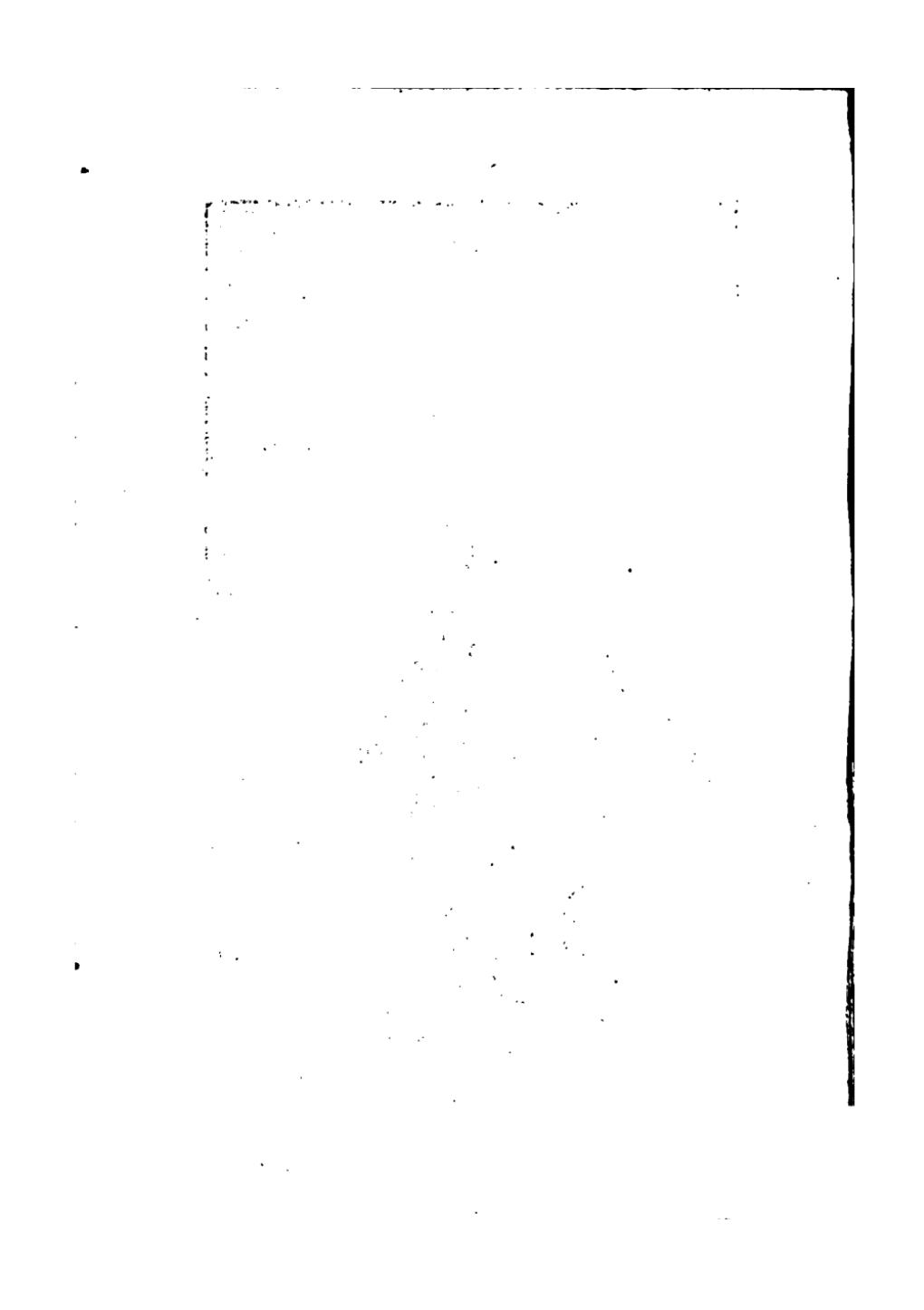


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"Mrs. Laval's maid came in to finish her toilette."

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T R A D I N G:

FINISHING

THE STORY OF "THE HOUSE IN TOWN," &c.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"THE WIDE WIDE WORLD," "THE OLD HELMET,"
"WALKS FROM EDEN," ETC. ETC.

"For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods."



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TRADING.

CHAPTER I.

CHRISTMAS DAY was grey with clouds ; on the roofs of the city and in the streets the sun never shone all day. People called it cold. Sarah Staples found it so on her crossing. Inside Mrs Lloyd's front-door, however, it seemed to Matilda to be nothing but sunshine. She had not leisure to look at the grey sky, and to be sure the temperature was that of summer. Matilda had a great deal to do. Her various parcels were to be neatly tied up in white paper, with the names of the persons they were for nicely written thereon, and then committed to Mrs Bartholomew for arranging on the Christmas tree. Then the presents for Anna and Letitia were to be directed and sent ; Maria's basket packed and put in charge of the express-man ; and several little letters written, one to Mr Richmond. Till all these things were done, Matilda had no time to think of the weather ; then she found that the snow was beginning to fall and coming thick.

"Yes," said Norton, to whom she announced her discovery ; "and it's stinging, and coming on to blow. It will be a night ! I like it. That feels like Christmas."

"Then there'll be no party ?" said Matilda, rather more disappointed than she wanted to show.

"Party ?" said Norton, "what about the party ? it won't snow in *here*, Pink. What are you thinking of ? The party'll be all the merrier. I tell you, it feels like Christmas."

"But will they come through all the storm?"

"They'd come, if the hailstones were as big as eggs," said Norton. "You never saw one of grandmother's Christmas trees, Pink; and *they* never did, anywhere else. No fear but they'll come, every one of them. You go along and get dressed."

Matilda ran up-stairs, glancing out of the hall window as she passed with a thrill of delight and mystery. The air was darkening already with the falling snow, and the wind swept it past the house in a white mass; by contrast the evening splendours seemed greater than ever. She dressed in a trembling excitement of pleasure, as far as her own part of the preparation went; then Mrs Laval's maid came in to finish her toilette, and Mrs Laval came to superintend it. Matilda had only to stand still and be curled and robed and sashed and slippers, till the work was done; the maid went, and Mrs Laval took the child in her arms and asked if she was happy?

"Very happy," Matilda said.

"It does not take much to make you happy, love."

"Why, mamma!" said Matilda, looking down at her white ruffles and then at her adopted mother, "I have so much that I don't know what to do!"

Mrs Laval smiled and sighed, and kissed her again.

"And yet Christmas night is only beginning," she said. But the wind and the hail dashed at the windows as if answering her that it had indeed begun outside. Mrs Laval went away to her own dressing, and Matilda stood a moment at the window listening. It was long after dark now; but she could hear the whistle of the sleet as the wind bore it past, and the rush of ice and snow against the window-panes, and even through the close-fitting sash she could feel a little gush of keen air. And for one moment Matilda's thoughts darted to Sarah, at her crossing and in her cellar home, all that day and night. The contrast was as sharp as that little gush of icy air. Was it right? Matilda thought. Was it right, that her dainty white dress should be so pretty on her, and the Christmas party so fine,

when Sarah and others like her were in cold and wet and rags ? It was too disagreeable to think about, as Matilda could not help it ; and she went down-stairs.

How the house was lighted up ! it was a second daylight, only more splendid. What delicious warm air filled every room, and every staircase, and every lobby ! How handsome looked the marble floor of the hall, with its luxurious mats at every door ! But as her foot touched the marble, Matilda found something else to think of. Norton came out. He looked her up and down.

"What's the matter, Norton ?" said Matilda, a little wanting to know his opinion.

"Nothing," said he, nodding. "You'll do."

"This will be a very funny dress for me to play proverbs in,—don't you think so ? I don't look much like Judy's Satinalia."

"Not much," said Norton. "You don't look much like Judy's anything. O Pink ! do you know we are going to have a witch here to-night ?"

"A witch ?" said Matilda.

"A capital witch ; it's a capital idea too, for it's a new thing, and it's so hard to get hold of something new. I expect this'll be the party of the season."

"What do you mean ?" said Matilda.

"You'll see," said Norton. "Only don't be frightened. The witch won't hurt you."

And here came Judy, and took a good silent stare at Matilda. The two girls were dressed alike. Norton watched them with a sly glance. Without any remark or salutation, Judy passed them with a toss of her head, and went into one of the drawing-rooms.

"She'll do," said Norton, with a competent nod of his head in Judy's direction ; "that is, she'll do the insolent, whenever she has a mind to. She is a case, is Judy Bartholomew. Well, come, we must get out of the way, Pink. Somebody'll be here soon."

So they strolled into the lighted drawing-rooms, where Judy and David were ; and strolled about, consulting

arrangements for the play, till the doors opened, and other white dresses, and coloured sashes, and gallant white-trousered young gentlemen began to pour in and claimed their attention. And ladies accompanied them,—not a great many, but a few favoured mothers and aunts and elder sisters ; and soon the drawing-rooms were all alive with motion and colour, and noise with the hum of many voices.

It was a wonderful scene to Matilda. She forgot that she had so little to do with it, and was so left out of it by the gay little throng. She did not at first think of that. To be sure she was a stranger ; it was quite natural, as it seemed to her, that she should be left out. The pleasure was great enough, merely to look on. Everybody else was very busy talking and laughing and moving about the rooms,—all except herself. Matilda had never seen such a display of very young ladies and gentlemen ; the variety of styles, the variety of dresses, the diversity of face and manner, were an extremely rich entertainment. She noticed airs and graces in some, which she thought sat very ill on them ;—affectations of grown-up manner, tossings of curls, and flaunting of white gloves, and waving of fans, at which Matilda's simplicity was greatly astonished. Little gentlemen stood before little ladies, with hands behind their backs, and entertained them in conversation which appeared to be of the politest sort. And Judy's blue scarf flitted from end to end of the rooms, dipped to the floor as she curtseyed to new comers, and fluttered with delight as she darted to speak to some favourite or other. The rooms grew very lively. The gas-lights shone upon all the colours of the rainbow, moving and changing as if Mrs Lloyd's house had been a kaleidoscope. David and Norton were not in the company. Suddenly Norton stood at Matilda's side.

“What are you doing here, Pink ?”

“Nothing.” Matilda looked and smiled at him. “Only looking at everything.”

“But you ought to be *in it*, Pink.”

“In what ?”

"Why ! in the work ; in the talk. What are you sitting in a corner here for ?"

"You know, Norton, I do not know anybody."

"Hasn't Judy introduced you ?—Not to *any* one ?" said Norton. "Left you here ? Judy Bartholomew ! if it wasn't Christmas night and an inconvenient time to make a row"—

"Hush, hush, Norton. I am having a very good time," said Matilda, looking, as she felt, like a very happy little girl.

"Well," said Norton, "there are two odd people here to-night. One of 'em's Judy Bartholomew, and the other—is somebody you don't know. Come ! come here. Esther Francis !—this is my sister, my new sister Matilda. Hasn't Judy introduced you ?"

Norton had caught by the arm, as she was passing, a girl of about Judy's age, whom he thus brought face to face with Matilda. She was sweet-faced and very handsomely dressed, and she had no sort of shyness about her. She took Matilda's hand and looked at her with a steady look.

"Take care of her, will you ?" Norton went on.—"I have got to go and arrange things with David ; and Judy has her head full. Tell Matilda who's who ; she does not know the people yet."

The two girls stood a minute or two silently together ; Esther giving, however, a side-glance now and then at her companion.

"You have not been long in town ?" she said then, by way of beginning.

"Only three weeks."

"Of course, then, you are quite a stranger. It is very disagreeable, isn't it, to be among a whole set of people that you don't know ?" Esther said it with a little turn of her pretty head that was—Matilda could not tell just what it was. It showed the young lady very much at her ease in society, and it was not quite natural ; that was all she could make out. Matilda answered, that she did not find anything disagreeable. Esther opened her eyes a little wider.

"Do you know all about the arrangements to-night ?" she whispered.

"I suppose I do."

"Will there be dancing?"

"I have heard nothing about dancing," said Matilda. "I don't think there'll be much time for it. I don't see how there can be."

"Are you very fond of dancing?" Esther asked, with her eyes at the further end of the next room.

Matilda was conscious of feeling ashamed of her answer. Nevertheless she answered. "I do not know how to dance."

"Not dance!" said Esther, with a new glance at her. "Did you never dance? Oh, there's nothing I care for at parties but to dance. And there are just enough here tonight; not a crowd. Aunt Zara will send you to dancing-school, I suppose. But it isn't so pleasant to begin to learn when you are so old."

"Aunt Zara!" said Matilda. "Norton did not say you were his cousin."

"Norton's head was too full," said Esther, with another movement of her head that struck Matilda very much; it was quite like a grown-up young lady; and gave Matilda the notion that she thought a good deal of Norton. "Yes; we are cousins; that is why he told me to take care of you."

Matilda was tempted to say that Norton would save her that trouble as soon as he was at leisure to take it upon himself; but she did not. Instead, she asked Esther how old she had been when she began to take dancing lessons.

"I don't know; three and a half, I believe."

The deficiency of Matilda's own education pressed upon her heavily. She was a little afraid to go on, for fear of laying bare some other want.

"Yes," said Esther, after another interval of being absorbed in what was going on in the next room; "yes; of course, you know I began to learn to dance as soon as I began to wear—stays," she uttered, in a whisper; and went on aloud, "The two things together. Oh, yes; I was almost four years old."

Here she broke off to speak to some one passing, and Matilda was lost in wonderment again. A little uneasy

too ; for though the young lady kept her post at the side of the charge Norton had given her, and evidently meant to keep it, Matilda thought she had an air of finding her office rather a bore. A young lady who had danced and worn stays from the time she was four years old, must necessarily know so much of life and the world that a little ignoramus of a country girl *would* be a bore.

"What are they going to do then, to-night, if we are not to dance ?" resumed Esther, when her friend had passed on ; "just have the Christmas tree and nothing else ?"

Nothing else *but* a Christmas tree ! Here was an experience !

"Norton and David are going to make a play," said Matilda, "acting a proverb."

"Oh !" said Esther. "A proverb ! David is a good player, and Norton too ; excellent ; that will be very good. I thought I heard something about a *witch* ; what is that ?"

"What is what ?" said Judy, who found herself near.

"About the *witch* ?" said Esther.

"It's—mystery."

"Then *is* there to be a *witch* ?"

"Certainly."

"Who will it be ?"

"Part of the mystery," said Judy. "Upon my word, I don't know. I couldn't find out ; and I tried, too."

"What is she going to do ?"

"That's the rest of the mystery. Without being a *witch* myself, how am I going to tell ?"

"I have heard sometimes that you *were*," said Esther.

"Ah ! But there are *witches* and *witches*," said Judy ; "black and white, you know, and good and bad. I'm a black *witch*, when I'm any. It's not my business to get people out of trouble."

"I shall never ask you," said Esther, shaking her head. "But where is the *witch* to be ? and when will she appear ?"

"She won't appear. She will be in her den. All who want to see her will go to her den. So much I can tell you." And Judy ran off before another question could be asked.

The elder ladies came in now, and there was a fresh stir. Mrs Laval introduced Matilda to several boys and girls in the company before many minutes had gone ; but there was time for little else beside an introduction, for the boys were ready to play ; and all the guests were assembled in one room to leave the other free for their operations and give a good view of them. In that room the lights were lowered too, to make the scene of the play more brilliant by comparison.

The play was a great success. Matilda laughed for very delight, as well as at the fun of the thing. David, who personated the poor man who had come to sell a piece of ground, talked so admirably like a countryman, and was so oddly crochety and cross and gruff and impossible to make terms with ; and then Norton, who was the rich man he had come to see, and who wanted the land, coaxed him so skilfully, and ordered all sorts of good things to be brought to him, when he found he had come a good way and was hungry ; and the imaginary banquet was very funny, David making inquiries and comments over the dishes he did not know, and Norton supplying him with others, till he was satisfied. Then, in soothed good humour, David was easy to deal with, and let his land go a bargain. The acting was really extremely good ; both the boys being clever and without any sort of embarrassment or any even shy affectation. The proverb which Matilda and Judy were to have played was given up for want of time. The boys' proverb was guessed by one of the elder ladies—" It is ill talking between a full man and a fasting." Matilda was very glad, for her part, that she and Judy were let off.

A hush of expectancy fell now upon the little company. It was time for the tree to be displayed. Even talking hushed, while all eyes were upon the folding-doors leading to the last drawing-room to be thrown open. Matilda was at the back of the crowd, but even there she could see the blaze of light within as soon as this was done ; and the whole company pressed forward and peeped in. Such a beautiful sight, then, her eyes had never beheld. The tree

was a generous, large, tall young fir, set in a huge green tub ; but whereas in the wood where it grew it had green branches, with fringy, stiff, prickly leaves, now its branches were of every colour, and as it were fringed with light. From the lowest bough to the topmost shoot it was a cone of brilliancy and a pyramid of riches. Lights glittered from every twig, and among the lights below them and above them, near the stem and out at the tips of the bending boughs and covering the moss which covered the tub, were trinkets, or toys, or articles of wear, or packages done up in white or coloured paper, and made gay with coloured ribbons. So bountiful a tree, so elegant a tree, one so rich in its resources of pleasure, perhaps no eyes there had ever seen ; for when Mrs Lloyd did anything she was accustomed to do it thoroughly ; and she had on this occasion two backers. One burst of admiration from the whole little crowd was followed by accents of delight and murmurs of expectation.

The tree stood in the middle of the large drawing-room, and the bright crowd which formed round it was surely a pretty sight ;—a sight for the elders alone ; no child had eyes for anything but the tree. Eager eyes, glad eyes, sparkling and glowing with delight and expectation ; a little, soft, rustling, hustling crowd, swaying gently, agitated, moved here and there, to and fro, but all fastened to that brilliant centre of a Christmas tree, as much as ever the planets to their centre. At the very back of the crowd, as she was, Matilda stepped on an ottoman to see better ; and for her even expectation was almost lost in bewildered fascination. In truth, the Christmas tree was a beautiful spectacle. The fairy-like beauty was what Matilda thought of at first ; then she began gradually to notice how its branches were laden with other things besides lights, and how the little company was all on tiptoe with eagerness. With a certain faint flutter at her own heart, Matilda stood on her perch and watched.

Presently a tall young fellow, one of the oldest among the boys, took his stand by the tree with a long gilt rod in his hand. The crowd fell back a bit, and hushed its murmur

and rustle. No danger of anybody seeing Matilda ; not an eye turned her way. The lad with the gilt rod, who also was decorated with a favour of red and white ribbons, now lifted down from the tree one of its many packages, looked closely at it, and called aloud the name written thereon—a name Matilda did not know. The crowd stirred in one place, and a little figure came forward and took the package. Matilda wanted to know what it was very much ; but the little girl herself made no haste to discover. A slight private examination she gave, and with a smile and a blush clasped her little hand upon the package, and looked to see what would be next. The play went on after this fashion ; the presiding gilt rod was quick in its operations, as indeed it had need to be ; names were called out in rapid succession ; and presently the whole circle was astir, with coming and going, explanations and questions and whispers of delight, now and then a spring or a dance of exultation ; and still the gilt rod went on hooking down things from the tree and signalling the owners to come and take possession.

"Mrs Laval !—from *Matilda*. I suppose Mrs Laval knows who Matilda is ?" said the master of ceremonies. A new thrill went all through the distant possessor of that name. "That's my obelisk !" she thought. "I wonder if she will like it ? Yes, she knows Matilda, a little."

"Norton Laval !—from his sister. I didn't know that Norton had a sister."

"The things you don't know are always more than the things you do know, Edward Foster," said Norton, coming forward to receive his watch-guard.

"'You' meaning—whom ?" said gilt rod, hooking down another ribbon-looped parcel. "By virtue of my office I know so many things just now, that I grow conceited, and am surprised to find myself ignorant anywhere. Matilda Laval !—from her mother."

With a great leap of her heart, Matilda jumped down from her ottoman and made her way as she could through the throng. The tall boy with the gilt rod presented to her a small square packet, sealed and tied. Matilda's fingers

clasped upon it as she stepped back ; and then for the first time that evening she found Judy at her side. Perhaps Judy would have spoken, if the next call had not been—

“ Matilda Laval !—from Mrs Bartholomew.”

Flushing and trembling, Matilda stepped forward again and received a second little packet, much like the former. Then Judy herself was called ; everybody by this time was getting his hands full : and still the Christmas tree blazed on as brightly as ever.

Presently Matilda got a third present ; this was from David ; much larger. She was very much astonished ; for without opening she could guess that it was something valuable ; it was hard and square and heavy. Of all there, not a child was in such private ecstasies as she. Her flushed cheeks told it ; otherwise she was quite undemonstrative—though I say wrong, for eyes and lips were abundantly expressive of tremulous joy.

“ Is that my present ? ” said Judy, by her side again. “ No, it is David’s. Do you know what it is ? ”

“ No,” Matilda whispered.

“ I don’t either. Why don’t you look ? ”

“ I will look by and by.”

“ Nonsense ! ” said Judy ; but Matilda was called off again to take what Judy had prepared for her.

“ That isn’t much,” said that young lady, when Matilda fell back to her former place ; “ it’s only bonbons. What has Aunt Zara given you ? ”

“ I don’t know yet, Judy.”

“ Oh, look ! And mamma ? Mamma wouldn’t tell me. Those are their gifts in your hand there, aren’t they ? Look and see. I can guess,” said Judy, peering round Matilda to see the packets.

“ No, you can’t,” said Norton, at the other side. He was fastening his guard-chain in its place. “ You don’t know, and she don’t know. I like people who can keep cool, and not dash their heads under water the first thing.”

“ Stuff ! ” said Judy. “ I want her to get her head above water ; she don’t see anything now, nor know anything.”

"Her head's all right," said Norton, composedly. "Knowledge'll come in time. I guess there's a good deal of it to come, too."

"What has David got, Norton?"

"Loads of books," said Norton, "and a rifle."

"A rifle!" screamed Judy.

"And a dressing-case, and a dressing-gown, and a riding-whip, and a watch-chain."

"And what have *you* got, Norton?" Matilda asked.

"Just what I wanted," said Norton, with a smile of confidence and secret good-fellowship which was most pleasant to Matilda; it made her feel not quite so much alone in that crowd. "You shall see," he went on. "Hallo! you're called. Give me some of your traps to hold for you, Pink; you have not got a hand to take anything more."

So Matilda gave him her bonbons and box—if it were a box—to hold, while she went forward again. This present was from Norton, and of itself filled her arms. Wrapped up in paper as it was, she could not know more of it than that. She came back to Norton with high-coloured cheeks and eyes very bright indeed.

"What's that?" said Judy. "What has Norton given you? It's big enough. Pshaw! I know; it's a desk."

"A desk!" exclaimed Matilda, in tones of delight.

"Keep your own counsel, Judy," said Norton, coolly. "You have no idea of keeping other people's."

"Norton," said Esther, coming up to them, "who is the witch?"

"Can't tell, even if I know," said Norton. "I keep other people's counsel."

"But where are we to see her?"

"In her den, of course."

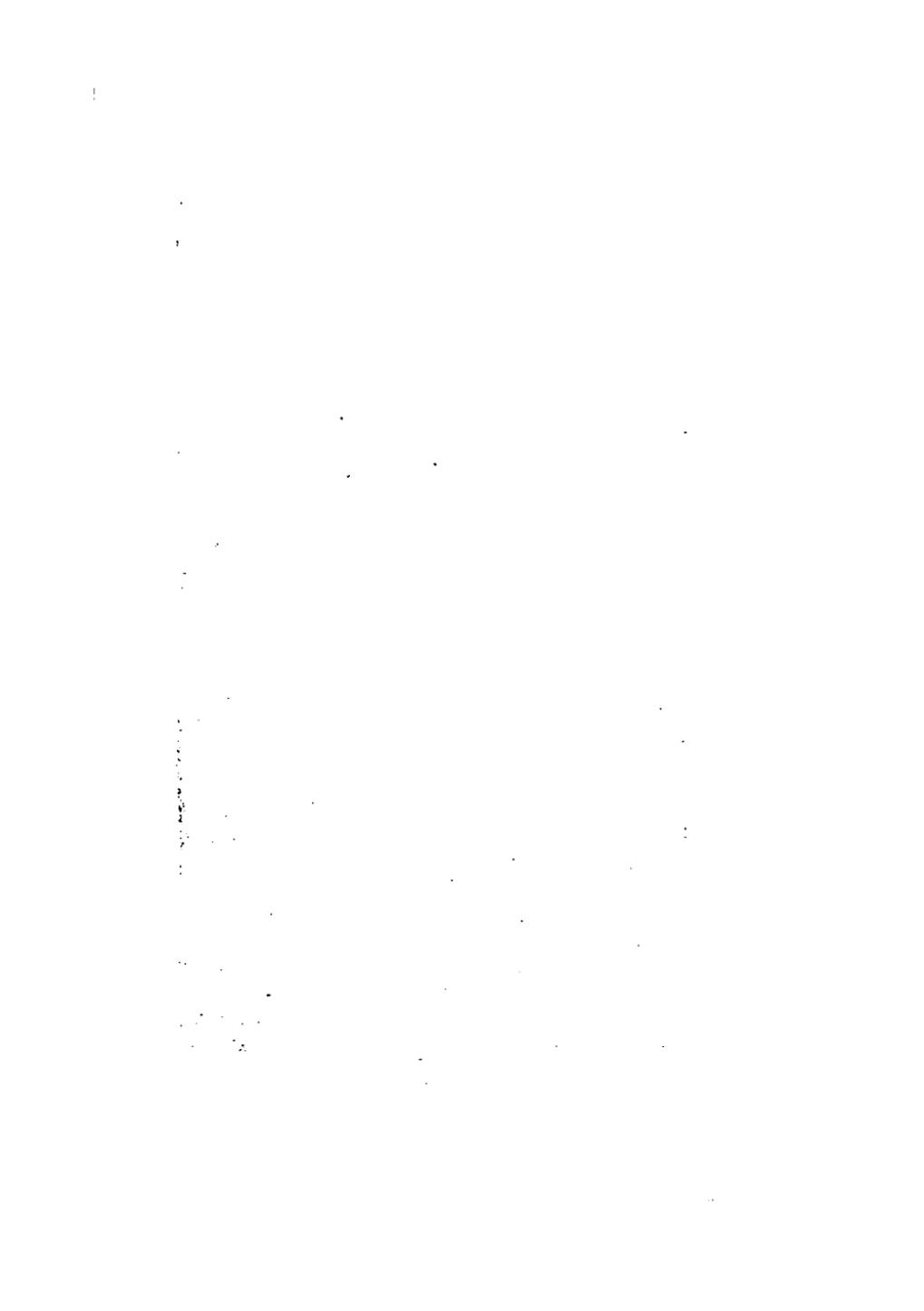
"Where's that?"

"You will know when the time comes."

"Then she won't come in here among us all?"

"I reckon not," said Norton. "She'll see only one at a time, I hear."

"What for?" said Esther.





"' Listen !' he said."

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"Ah, what for!" echoed Norton. "*I don't know, I can tell you; and what's more, I don't know yet whose notion it is.* Now, Pink, I propose we go up-stairs and put these things away. Supper will be in a few minutes, and then what will you do with your hands full? Come!"

And away he and Matilda went, slipping out of the room as quietly as they could, and then running up-stairs, till they found a quiet corner and breathing-place in Matilda's room.

"Now, Pink, don't you want to look?" said Norton, turning up the gas. He had his own curiosity too, it seems. But he did not interfere with her; he looked on, smiling and superior, while Matilda's trembling fingers pulled off the papers from his package first. Judy had spoken truly; it was an elegant little desk, all fitted and filled. Matilda's heart, Norton could see, was quite full with that.

"Come!" said he, gaily, "let us see Davy's choice. I don't know what it is; Davy don't tell all his mind."

And he stopped, for Matilda uttered a little scream of pleasure. David's choice had been a work-box. It was of pretty fancy wood, charmingly lined and fitted up.

"Pretty well for David!" said Norton. "He thinks you know what to do with a work-box, and reason too. Good for him. But now, Pink, guess what this is!"

And Norton possessed himself of the little parcel which bore his mother's handwriting, and held it up before Matilda.

"I can't guess."

"Try. What would you *like*, Pink? What would you like better than anything else? Think."

"O Norton!" said Matilda, with changing colour, "I don't know; I am afraid to guess. It's something small; could it be a locket with her hair?"

Norton with a delighted face put his hand with the parcel close to Matilda's ear, with the other hand forbidding her to touch it. "Listen!" he said. Matilda listened, and absolutely grew pale with intensity of excitement.

"I hear something, Norton!" she said, seizing the package.

"Ah, you do!" said Norton. "Now you know! Yes, just look at it. Isn't it a beauty? I was with mamma when she got it. There's no mistake in that, Pink; it's a splendid watch, Bars and Bullion said;—I mean, the man at Bars and Bullion's, and I believe it was Bullion himself. Do you like it? Now, Pink, we must not stay a minute longer; supper will be on hand, and you want some, don't you. Come! Put these away, and come."

Matilda could do it, even without looking at her bonbons or Mrs Bartholomew's present, and with only a glance at her watch. She locked up her treasures and went down with Norton—a happy child, if there was one in the city that night.

CHAPTER II.

SUPPER was just served when they got down-stairs. It was another variety of this wonderful evening. The dining-room long table was so beautiful with lights, fruits, greens, and confections, with setting of plate and glass, that to Matilda it was almost as much of a sight as the Christmas tree had been. But the others were accustomed to this sort of thing, and fell to tasting, with very little rapture about the seeing. What a buzz the room was in, to be sure! Tongues were fairly unloosed over oysters and sandwiches; and all the glory of the Christmas tree was to talk about, with comparisons of presents, plans, and prospects. Matilda looked on, half bewildered, but so very happy that it hardly occurred to her to remember that she might like something to eat too. Everybody was attending upon the wants of the guests, though certainly Matilda did notice that Judy had a plateful of something, and was eating as busily as she was talking. Doing neither, for she knew nobody to talk to, Matilda waited, and thought of her watch, in a trance of rapture.

"Why, my dear, is nobody attending to you?" she heard the voice of Mrs Lloyd say at last. "Have you had nothing all this while?"

"No, ma'am; they are all so busy."

But David came up at the minute, and Matilda had no longer anything to complain of. He served her very kindly, and Matilda found that she was very hungry. She got a chance, however, to thank David for her work-box.

"I am sure you deserve it," he said. "What did Judy give you?"

He looked very little pleased, Matilda thought, when she told him. But he only helped her carefully to everything she would have, and said no more about it.

A third wonder to Matilda that evening was the style and amount of eating that went on. The ices were in beautiful fruit forms ; and she thought when she had demolished one of them she had done enough, especially as caramel and candied fruits and other confections were awaiting her attention. But the circulation of these little ices went on at a rate that proved Matilda's moderation to be shared by few, and she heard one little lady say to another, herself with a plateful, "Is that your *third* or your *fourth* ?" Slowly munching candied grapes, Matilda looked on and marvelled. Presently Norton came to see if she wanted anything, and then Esther joined them, and the talk was of the witch again.

"We are going to see her now," said Norton ; "just as soon as we have done with the table."

"What's it all for ?" inquired Esther.

"I don't know," said Norton, shaking his head. "Some crotchet of somebody's. I don't know anything about it. Only everybody is invited to go and see the witch ; and the witch's den is in the little reception-room on the other side of the hall ; and we must go in one by one ; and we must answer every question we are asked, or we shall get no good of our interview. So much I am informed of."

"What good shall we get if we do answer all the questions ?" Esther asked.

"If I was a wizard, maybe I could tell you, Esther. You should ask David. There used to be witches, and wizards too, among his people."

"They were forbidden," said David, gravely.

"But they were there all the same," said Norton.

"Not all the same," said David ; "for it was death by the law ; and no good ever came of them, and nobody good ever went to them."

"O David," said Matilda, timidly, but the occasion was too tempting to be lost ; "do you know what they did ? Did they only play tricks, or was there anything real about it ?"

Perhaps David took a different view of the occasion ;

for after one earnest look into Matilda's face, as if he would answer her, he turned it off with lightly saying that the witches were real, for Saul had them all put to death that he could find ; and then saying that he would go and look after this particular witch. And presently he came back and proclaimed that she was ready to receive visitors.

"Who are to go, Davy ? Who are to go to see her ?" were the inquiries huddled one upon another.

"Everybody," said David. "One at a time."

"What are we to do ? What are we to say ?"

"Answer questions."

"The witch's questions ?"

"Certainly."

"Why must we answer her questions ? and what will she ask us about ?"

"Really you must judge for yourselves about the one thing, and find out for yourselves about the other. I cannot tell you."

"Will *you* answer her questions ?"

"Perhaps."

"Oh, come along !" was the cry then ; "you can't get anything out of him. Who will go first ?"

Caramel and ices had done their utmost, and now the witch became the absorbing interest. And as those who came back from the witch's den, it was found, would tell nothing of what had transpired there, the interest was kept up at white heat. First one went, and then another ; of course, the young people of the household were the last.

The witch's den, when Norton entered it, was a place he did not recognise, though in reality it was manufactured out of the little corner reception-room. Dark drapery enclosed and mystified the space into which he was admitted ; the light came from he could not see where, and was dim enough too ; and the witch was not to be seen, nor, distinctly, anything else. Norton took his stand as he had been directed, in front of a dark curtain, and waited. The first question demanded his name, and when that had been answered the voice went on—

"What do you want of the witch?"

"That depends on what she can do," said Norton.

"Power unlimited."

"Then I wish she would cast a spell upon Mrs Lloyd."

"To what effect?"

"That she would let me have the little corner attic-room for a greenhouse."

"How would you warm it?"

"It wouldn't want much more warming than it has now. A gas stove would do, I think."

"You may go. You shall hear from me in the course of the week."

Norton went out in high glee. "She's a brick, that witch!" he exclaimed. "Go along, Judy—and make haste; people are taking leave now. I don't know whose the voice is, though," he went on; "I couldn't make it out. I guess"—But Norton stopped; and Judy went in.

"Are you in want of anything, Judy Bartholomew?" the unseen witch asked.

"I haven't got all I want," said Judy; "if you mean that."

"State what is needed."

"There are a great many things," said Judy, unblushingly; "but the two things I wish for most particularly are—to give a ball, for one; and to have a diamond ring, for the other."

"Short of those two things, all your wishes are satisfied, then?"

"No," said Judy, hesitatingly; "I didn't say that. I want lots of things besides; but those two most."

"You may go. The Witch always wants time. Have you any debts to pay? of money or any other sort?"

"No, indeed," said Judy, decidedly.

"Is there anybody to whom you would like to do a kindness?"

"Not that I know of."

"You may go. Your wants shall be considered."

Judy came out triumphant. She would have had her brother go next, but he insisted that Matilda should precede

him. So Matilda went into the darkened, mysterious boudoir of the receptions.

"Who is this?" said the voice.

And a gentle answer came; not like Judy's proclaiming of herself, yet clear and frank too.

"Matilda Laval, what would you like of all things, if you could have it?"

Matilda hesitated. "There are so many things," she began, "it isn't very easy"—

"So many things you would like?"

"Yes, ma'am. Not for *myself*," she added, in a kind of horror at being supposed to entertain such wishes under the flood of good things that had come upon her that evening.

"Well, go on. It is for yourself in one way. Say what, of all you can think of, would give you most pleasure."

Matilda's hands came together with a certain pang of hope, as she answered—

"If I could make somebody comfortable that I know of—a poor, *good* girl, who is not comfortable at all."

"One of your sisters?"

"Oh no, ma'am; no relation."

"What is the matter with her, and how could you make her comfortable?"

"She is a very poor girl," said Matilda, so eager that she did not know what to bring out first; "she lives in a cellar room with a wet mud floor, and no bed to sleep on that is like a bed; of course she cannot be very clean, nor have any comfort at all; and I should like to make her comfortable."

"Who is she?"

"A very poor girl that goes to Sunday-school. But she is very good."

"Does she live there alone?"

"Oh, there are three of them: her mother and little brother."

"Then why does not the mother earn money and live better?"

"She works for it; she sews; but the people give her almost nothing for her work; and Sarah sweeps a crossing."

"How did you come to know all this?"

"I saw Sarah in Sunday-school; and I heard about her from my teacher, and he showed me the place where she lives. He knows she is good."

"And what do you want to do for her?"

"I want to get her out of that place, and into a decent room, and give her a comfortable bed."

"What is her name?"

"Sarah Staples."

"How long would she keep decent, do you think?"

"Always," said Matilda, confidently. "I am sure she would be just as nice as she possibly could. Where she is, she has no chance."

"Well, go; the witch will look into it."

Matilda went out, hardly knowing what to think, or whether she might hope anything from this very doubtful interview. Just as she reached the door, she was called back.

"Have you no wishes for yourself, little girl?"

"No, ma'am; thank you."

"Is there nothing in the world you would like?"

"I suppose a great many things," said Matilda; "but I have got so many now, I am afraid to wish."

"Why?"

"I don't think I *ought* to wish for anything more for myself."

"You are the first person I ever saw, young or old, who put an 'ought' before his wishes. Most people put it after them. Well, as a reward, tell me one more thing, for yourself, that you would wish for if you could have it."

Matilda thought, and hesitated. She did not at all like to tell her thought. At last the witch urged her to speak out and be quick.

"If I were to choose and wish for anything more," Matilda said, slowly, "which I don't; but if I *did* wish for anything more, it would be for a beautiful picture I have seen."

"Aha!" said the witch. "Where did you see it?"

"At Goupil's."

"And what picture was it?"

"It was the picture of the woman searching for the lost piece of money."

"Well ; you are an odd child. You may go ; and if there is anybody else to come, let them make haste. I am as tired as if I were not a witch."

A minute after David entered the den.

"I know who you are," said the witch. "Speak your heart's desire ; and in one word, if you can."

"In one word, Hebrew."

"What of Hebrew ?"

"To learn it."

"Learning is a thing I cannot do for you."

"No ; but the means."

"What means ?"

"Permission, time, books, and a teacher."

"You are another odd one. Is that your dearest heart's wish, David Bartholomew ?"

"I think it is the greatest I have, at present."

"Well ; leave it with me and go."

"Hallo, David !" exclaimed Norton, as he came out into the hall ; "the people are all gone ; the last one just had the door shut behind him."

"It 's time," said David.

"Takes more than a party to shake you out of your gravity," said Norton ; "time ? why, yes, it 's past twelve."

"Sunday !" exclaimed Matilda.

The other three, they were together in the hall, all burst out laughing.

"It 's Sunday ; and Christmas is over, and the Christmas tree," said Norton. "But the fruits keep. Extraordinary tree ! Well, Pink ; we have got to go and sleep now. Do you want to take another look at the tree ?"

They all went into the drawing-room which had been the scene of so much festivity. The tree stood there yet in its tub, with ribbons and gilt work hanging to it ; but the lights were burnt out, and the splendour was gone, and its riches were scattered. It was a thing of the past already.

"The fruits will keep," Norton repeated.

"Did you find out who the witch was, David?"

"I thought I knew."

"I *know* I knew," said Norton; "but she had somebody else to speak for her. What a jolly witch! We shall hear from her some of these days. Well, good night."

Kisses and thanks and good nights had to be exchanged with the older members of the family; and Sunday was well begun when at last Matilda shut her door behind her. She had to take one look at her watch; it was no doubt a little beauty, and to Matilda's vision it was a very fruit and embodiment of fairyland; beyond even her wildest dreams of what was possible from a Christmas tree. Her own watch! She could scarcely believe it, even with the watch lying securely in her hand. And with the delicate minute hand pointing but fifteen minutes off from one o'clock, she still stood gazing and rapt. Then as the hand went on to fourteen minutes, and thirteen, Matilda started and laid it down. To have her own watch telling her it was time to go to bed! But she must just look at Mrs Bartholomew's present.

Hurriedly she untied the box and pulled off the silver paper. And within the silver paper, inside the box, lay a dainty gold bracelet.

It was extremely pretty, and had cost a great deal, no doubt. It was very kind of Judy's mother to give it. Nevertheless, round the bracelet crept a sort of cobweb of thoughts and feelings which were not all of pleasure. It was too late to examine into them now. Matilda wrapped up the trinket again, and put it away, and went to bed; as happy as it seemed possible for her to be.

Sunday morning was high and bright, it must be confessed, when she awoke. Bells were ringing—the eight o'clock bells she thought they must be; but, indeed, they were the bells for Sunday-school. Matilda did not guess that, and so was not in an immediate hurry to get out of bed and end the luxurious rest which the excitements and late hours of the day before had made so welcome and so

long. She lay still, shut her eyes, and opened them upon the morning brightness, with a thrilling and bounding rapture of recollection that there was a little gold watch in her drawer which owned her for its mistress, and would be her inseparable friend and servant, and adornment, thence-forward. Matilda lay still for very happiness. Turning her head a little towards the window, the next time she opened her eyes it seemed to her that she saw a picture standing there against the wall. Matilda shut her eyes and told herself that she was not dreaming, and had no business to see visions in broad daylight. "I have been thinking so much about that picture, I suppose, and talking about it to the witch, that is the reason I thought I saw it. But what did I see that looked like a picture?" She opened her eyes now and raised herself on her elbow to look, for this was curious. More curious still! there, against the wall, in plain view, in the broad light, stood the beautiful engraving that had so captivated her.

"It's there!" was Matilda's thought. "The very thing! But what is it there for?"

A half-formed suspicion made her jump out of bed very spryly and run to the picture. There was a little ticket stuck in between the glass and the frame.

"*For Matilda Laval—with Mrs Lloyd's thanks and approbation.*"

Matilda looked, rushed back into bed, and arranged herself so that she could comfortably see the picture, while she thought about it.

"*Mrs Lloyd's thanks*"—thanks for what? She must know, she *must* know about the shawl. Yes, she *must*; I guess mamma told her. And it is mine! it is mine! There she is, that beautiful thing, the woman hunting for her lost money; the odd little lamp, and all. It is mine to keep. Certainly I ought not to wish for another thing for a whole year to come, I have got so much. This and my watch, oh, delightful!—I ought to be good! How lovely the light from that little old lamp is. And that is the way Jesus looks for us—for people who are lost, lost in the dark. So

He looked for *me*, and found me. And there are such a great many more lost that are not found yet. Lost in the dark!—And if He cares for them so, He must wish His servants to care too, and to look for them, and save all they can. Then that woman with her pretty lamp just shows me what I ought to do and how I ought to feel."

Musing on this way, very happy, leaning on her elbow to look at the picture, too warm in the soft air of her room to be disturbed by the necessity of getting dressed, Matilda noticed at last that the bells had stopped ringing. It was eight o'clock past, she thought, and time to get up; but she would look at her watch to see how eight o'clock looked on its pretty white face. Lo, it was nine! Sunday-schools already beginning their services, while she stood there in her night-gown, dressing and breakfast yet to be gone through. But the afternoon was the time for school in the place where Matilda went; so all was not lost.

And so ended the doings of that Christmas night.

CHAPTER III.

THE experience of the morning certainly was rather scattering in its tendency, as far as any sober thought or work was concerned. The young people were brimful of life and fun and excitement; and it was impossible for Matilda to escape the infection. Nevertheless, after lunch, she had firmness enough left to put on her coat and hat, and trudge off to Sunday-school by herself. Norton said he had not "slept out," and would not go. Matilda went, with her little watch safe in her breast.

Getting out into the cold air, and setting her feet upon the snowy streets, had somewhat the effect of breaking a spell. For a while, that seemed now a very long while, Matilda had been in a whirl of expectation and pleasure, and in a kind of dream of enchantment ; nothing but soft luxury, and visions of delight, and one thing after another to make the child think she had got into very fairyland. But the streets outside were not fairyland ; and the sharp air pinched her cheek with a grip which was not tender or flattering at all. The sense began to come back to Matilda that everybody was not having such rose-coloured dreams as she, nor living in summer-heated rooms. Nay, she saw children that were ill-dressed, on their way like her ; some who were insufficiently dressed ; a multitude who were not nicely dressed ; the contrast was very unpleasant, and a certain feeling of uneasiness, and of responsibility, and of desire to make other people comfortable, crept over her anew. Then she remembered that she could not reach many, she could not do much ; and she came into school and took her seat at last with a concentrated desire to do at least something effectual towards rescuing Sarah Staples from her miserable circumstances. After the lesson was done and the scholars were dismissed, Matilda asked Mr Wharncliffe if she could speak to him ?

"Is it a minute's work, or several minutes?" he inquired.

"I don't know, sir; I think several minutes."

"Then wait a minute, and we will walk home together."

Matilda liked that, and presently, in the clear late light of the waning winter afternoon, she and her teacher sallied forth into the street hand in hand.

"Now, what is it?" he asked.

"About Sarah, Mr Wharncliffe."

"Well! What about her?"

"I have been thinking a great deal, Mr Wharncliffe, how to manage it; because I had not a great deal of money myself, and I did not know whether I could get help or no; but now I think I *shall* have some help, and I wanted to consult you to know what I had best do."

"What do you want to do?"

"First, I want to get her out of that dreadful place into a comfortable room somewhere."

"Suppose you do, how is she going to stay in it?"

"What do you mean, sir?"

"The rent of such a room as you speak of would be, say, seventy-five cents or a dollar a week. How are Sarah and her mother to pay that?"

"Oh, I should have to pay it for them. I could do that, I think."

"For how long?"

Matilda looked at her teacher, and did not immediately answer. She had not looked ahead so far as that.

"It is necessary to take all things into consideration," he said, answering her look. "You would not wish to put Sarah and her mother into a place of comfort for a little while, merely to let them fall out of it again?"

"Oh no, sir!"

"How are they to be maintained in it?"

Matilda pondered.

"I could take care of the rent, I think—I mean, *we* could, for a while,—for a year, perhaps; by that time couldn't they pay it, don't you think?"

"How?"

"By their work ; by their earnings."

"But now, and for a long time past, their work has not enabled them to pay for anything better than they have got."

"Couldn't they do something better, Mr Wharncliffe ? something else, that would give them more money ?"

"What work could you help them to that would pay better ?"

"I don't know, sir," said Matilda, looking up wistfully in her teacher's face. "I don't know anything about such things. Can you tell me ? What work is there that they could get ? What do other poor people do ?"

"There are other things," said Mr Wharncliffe, thoughtfully. "There are better and better paying sorts of sewing : what Mrs Staples does is very coarse, and she gets very little for it. But machine-work now-a-days puts hand-work at a disadvantage."

"What is machine-work, sir ?"

"Work done on a sewing machine. With a machine a woman can do, I suppose, ten times as much in a day, and with more ease to herself."

"Well, wouldn't Mrs Staples work on a machine ?"

"I do not know. I think she used to take in washing once. She could do that again, if she had a better room and conveniences."

"And does that pay better ?"

"I believe so ; indeed, I am sure."

"Then she might do washing," said Matilda ; "and Sarah might sew on a machine, Mr Wharncliffe."

"She has not got one, you know."

"If we could get her one ! Wouldn't that be nice, Mr Wharncliffe ?"

"My dear child, a good sewing machine costs a good deal of money."

"But if we could, Mr Wharncliffe ? I said if."

"Nothing could be better. Perhaps by and by it might be managed. In the meantime, Sarah might learn, and possibly get work ; or get a machine and pay for it gradually

by doing work for the makers. Such arrangements are made."

"How much does a sewing machine cost?"

"From forty-five to sixty dollars."

"Forty-five," repeated Matilda, gravely. "But, Mr Wharncliffe, in the first place, the thing to do is to get them out of that place into a new room. Might we not do that? and don't you think the rest can be managed somehow?"

"If we do that, the rest *must* be managed if possible. It is always greater kindness and a far greater benefit, Matilda, to help poor people to take care of themselves, than to save them that care."

"Why, sir?"

"People are better and happier and stronger working for their living and earning it, and keeping the sense of independence, than they are when living on the money of other people, and losing their own self-respect. That is very ruinous to character. Avoid it always, in all your efforts to help people."

"Yes, I see," said Matilda, thoughtfully. "But, Mr Wharncliffe, Sarah and her mother cannot do anything to get in a better way while they live in that cellar. They want some help just at first; don't they?"

"Certainly; and I think we have struck the right line of action to pursue for them. Help to put them in the way of being comfortably independent is just what they want."

"Then the first thing is a lodging," said Matilda, with a relieved and brightening face. "How can we find one, Mr Wharncliffe? I don't want them to know about it till we get it all settled and ready for them to move into."

"Ready for them?" said Mr Wharncliffe, inquiringly.

"Yes, sir; you know they have nothing to put into a nice room now, if they had one."

"Aren't you laying plans beyond your means?"

"Beyond *mine*; but I shall have some help. I don't know exactly how much, but some."

"Well, you will let me help too, if necessary," said the gentleman. "And I will look out for a lodging."

"Oh, thank you! Will you, sir?"

"To be sure. That is one way I am going to help."

"And when you have found one, you will let me know?"

"Who else? Certainly, I will. I shall take no step without your direction."

"Oh, thank you, sir!" said Matilda, again.

They had been walking up the avenue during this talk, to have uninterrupted time for it; now they had turned about to come home. Clear and bright and cold the sun was leaving the streets and lingering about the house roofs and chimneys; and the steeples and churches were shining marks of light on one side, on the other dark spires against the western sky. Mr Wharncliffe and Matilda quickened their steps, which the frosty air made it pleasant to do. She supposed that the subject of their conversation was ended for the present, and so was somewhat surprised to hear the next question from her companion. It came out after some little pause.

"Matilda, what has put this in your head?"

"This we have been talking of? Why, I wanted to make Sarah comfortable. I could not bear to have her in that dreadful place. Mr Wharncliffe, don't you think it is dreadful?"

"I do think it is dreadful, and your feeling very natural. Then you want to go to this expense and trouble for the comfort of knowing that she is comfortable?"

"I think so," said Matilda, somewhat puzzled. "I could not bear to think of her there."

"All perfectly right, Matilda," said her friend, smiling. "I only want, while you are taking care of Sarah, to take care of you."

"How, sir?"

"There are so many ways in which good things may be done; and I wish you to take the best."

"What ways do you mean, sir? I do not understand."

"There is one way of doing kind things, merely or chiefly to save one's self from the uncomfortable feeling that the

sight of misery gives. Kind people of that sort are benevolent in spots, just when they see or hear of something that touches them, and never at any other time. Others do kind things because they like to have a name for generosity, and giving money costs them nothing."

Matilda looked inquiringly up in Mr Wharncliffe's face. "It made me very uncomfortable to see Sarah in that place," she said ; "and to think of her in it."

"A third sort of kindness," Mr Wharncliffe went on, smiling, "is done because people love the Lord Jesus, and so love all whom He loves, and like to do the work He wants done."

"But it makes them feel badly to see people suffering," said Matilda.

"Undoubtedly. They are the tenderest of all. But they will do as much for people they never saw, as for those at hand ; and their spring of kindness never dries up. It is a perpetual flow. When they do not see objects on which to spend it, they seek them out."

Matilda pondered matters a little. Then she lifted a very honest face towards her companion.

"Which reason did you think made me want to do this for Sarah, sir ?"

"I wanted *you* to think about it."

"Don't you think, Mr Wharncliffe, it is very difficult to find out really why one does things ?"

"Very difficult," said Mr Wharncliffe, with a comical drawing of his lips ; "but very useful."

"I do not *think*," began Matilda again, very gravely, "I do not *think* my wanting to do this for Sarah was just to make myself feel comfortable."

"I do not *think* it, my child ; but it is no harm to have your attention directed to the question. In all such matters, keep your action pure ; let everything be done for Christ, and then it will be all right. For instance, Matilda, when the real motive is self, or when there is no higher at work, one is easily tempted to do too much in a given case ; to indulge one's self with great effects and astonishing liberality ;

when, if it were simply for Christ, one would be moderate and simple and prudent, and keep a due proportion in things."

"Yes," said Matilda, looking puzzled; "I understand. You will help me keep a 'proper proportion' in what I do for Sarah Staples, Mr Wharncliffe?"

"How much are you thinking of doing?"

"I want to get her into a comfortable room," said Matilda. "That is first. Then they have no furniture, Mr Wharncliffe."

"You want to get them some?"

"Would that be too much? a little common things, of course, but what they cannot be comfortable without."

"How much money do you propose to spend on Sarah at this time?"

"I do not know. I know about how much I have, but I can't tell yet how much help I shall get. I want to do what *ought* to be done."

The last words were said with such an accent of earnest determination, that Mr Wharncliffe again had almost smiled at his scholar; but he did not. He went on quite gravely—

"A room and some necessary furniture, I should think, could be managed."

"Then we want to get them into a way of earning more."

"Yes; I will see about that; and about the room; and I can get what you want in furniture at a second-hand place, where the articles will cost very little."

"That's good," said Matilda. "Well, Mr Wharncliffe, all *that* will not be too much?"

"I think not."

Matilda hesitated, and then added, doubtfully, "Don't you think they want clean dresses?"

Mr Wharncliffe smiled now.

"Where shall we stop?" said he.

"But they are very uncomfortable," said Matilda, after waiting to choose a word. Her teacher thought for a minute of Sarah's well-worn, faded, lank, best dress, and how little

evidently there was under it to keep the child warm, and his brow grew very sober indeed, and his blue eye misty.

"I'll not check you, Matilda," he said, "unless I see you going to some great extravagance. Go on, and I'll help, and we'll try to make one bad spot at least a little better. Good-bye!"

With a smile and a nod he parted from her at her own door, and Matilda ran up the steps and ran in with a whole little gale of pleasure freshening through her heart.

There was a gale of another sort blowing through the house that evening, and making the household lively. Pleasure was not wanting to it, though it was pleasure of another sort, and largely mixed with excitement. The three other young ones were full of plans for the holiday week, reminiscences of the last evening, comparison and discussion of presents and of people. Matilda in the midst of them listened and was amused, and thought of her gold watch and of Sarah with great secret throbs of delight in her heart.

"So you were the witch, grandmother," said Norton. "I knew it. I was sure of it. What did you do it for?"

"Do what, boy?"

"Take up a witch's trade."

"I have not laid it down yet."

"No, ma'am; but what put it in your head?"

"I wanted my share of the fun," said the old lady.

"Did you get it, grandmamma?" asked David.

"Yes; a very good share."

"Did you ask everybody such questions as you asked us?" Norton inquired.

"I did not want to know the same thing about all of you."

"No, ma'am. Did you find out a good deal, grandmother?"

But Mrs Lloyd laughed, and declined to answer.

"There is something more I want to find out," she said. "I want to know what makes this little girl look so happy. She doesn't say a word, but her smiles speak for her!"

"Who—Matilda ?" said Norton.

"It's easy enough to be smiling," said Judy, with slight scorn.

"You might practise it then a little, and do no hurt," remarked Norton.

"Nobody ought to be always smiling," returned Judy; "it's vulgar ; and it doesn't mean anything, either."

"Hush! Judy," said her mother.

"What were you smiling about, Matilda ?" Mrs Lloyd asked.

"A great many things I was thinking of, ma'am."

But the little girl's face was so gleeful as she answered, and the smile and the sparkle were so pleasant, that the old lady's curiosity was raised.

"A great many things ?" she repeated, "A *great many* things to be glad of ? I should like to know what they are. Come, I will make a bargain with you. I will give you a silver penny for your thoughts, and my silver penny shall be a golden half-eagle."

"For my *thoughts*, ma'am ?" said Matilda, half bewildered ; while the other young ones burst out like a pack of hounds after their leader.

"A half-eagle," Mrs Lloyd repeated, "for *all* your thoughts, if you will give me them all. I want to know all the things you are feeling so glad about."

"Grandmamma, you'll do as much for me ?" cried Judy; "only mine will take an eagle to bring them down. They fly high. You might have bought hers, I am confident, for a duck or a pigeon."

"I should like to make a bargain too, grandmother," said Norton, "if you are in that mood."

"Do you think your thoughts are worth anything," said his grandmother, "to anybody but yourself ?"

"Whose are ?" said David.

"Mine are not," said Matilda. She had flushed high, for she saw that the old lady was in earnest ; and five dollars was a good deal to her just now.

"Everything is worth what it will fetch, though," said

David. "I advise you to close with the offer, Matilda. Five dollars is five dollars, you know."

Matilda's eyes went doubtfully to Mrs Lloyd.

"Yes," said the old lady, smiling. "I will stand to my part of the bargain, if you will stand to yours. But mind, I want *all*."

"There were so many things," Matilda began; "it would take me a good while to tell them."

"Never mind; we have nothing better to do," said Mrs Lloyd. "We are at leisure."

"Time's nothing," said Norton, in great amusement.

"At ten dollars or so an hour," added David.

Poor Matilda was in some difficulty. She was furnishing the entertainment of the whole circle; for even Mrs Bartholomew put down her paper, and Mrs Laval was smiling, and Mrs Lloyd was waiting, and the children were all open-eyed. But she had nothing to be ashamed of; and five dollars!—

"I was feeling glad about my watch," she began, "and about my picture—oh, so very glad! I think they have hardly been out of my mind all day."

"Picture! what picture?" said Judy.

"Hush!" said her grandmother.

"She didn't have any picture!" Judy went on. Matilda looked at her, and said nothing.

"Did you?" said Judy. "What was it? Is it in a locket?"

"You can attend to her afterwards, Matilda," said Mrs Lloyd. "At present, you are engaged with me. There is nobody here but you and me."

Matilda sincerely wished it had been so; but she had several curious pairs of ears listening to her.

"Then I was glad, I believe, about all the pleasure of last night, and the Christmas tree, and my other presents; but that wasn't all. To-day has been so very pleasant, and this afternoon particularly."

"This afternoon?" cried Judy. "Why, she was away at that horrid Sunday-school!"

"She don't think it is horrid," said Norton, displeased.

"You don't mean she shall get through what she has to say," remarked David.

"If you would all hold your tongues, there would be some chance," said Mrs Lloyd. "Try again, Matilda. Was there more? What made the afternoon so pleasant?"

"It always is at that school," said Matilda. "But besides that, this afternoon I believe I got some help for something I want to do; and thinking about that, and about what I want to do, was part of what I was feeling so glad about."

"Well, if that isn't a confused statement of facts!" said Judy. "Feeling so glad about—when?"

"When Mrs Lloyd asked me what I was smiling at."

"But I am to have your thoughts, you know," said Mrs Lloyd, with a rather pleasant smile. "You have not told me yet *what* it is you want to do, the thought of which is so agreeable."

"I did tell it to the witch last night," said Matilda. "Do you want me to tell it again now, ma'am?"

"Certainly. You don't think I am a witch, do you?"

On that point Matilda did not give her thoughts; but, as desired, she told the story briefly of Sarah and her home, and of the reforms proposed in the latter. The attention of her hearers was marked, although most of them indeed had known the matter before.

"What was there in all this to make you so very glad?" inquired Judy.

Matilda hesitated, and could not find what to say.

"Pink has her own ways of being happy, you see," Norton remarked.

"She is not the only one, I hope," said David.

"The only one—what?" said Judy, sharply. "You are as bad as she is, David, to-night, for talking thick."

"Have you got through, my dear?" inquired Mrs Lloyd, kindly.

"Through all the things that were making me feel glad?"

said Matilda. "No, ma'am—not quite," and she stopped and flushed.

"Let us have it," said Mrs Lloyd. "A bargain is a bargain."

"Yes, ma'am," said Matilda. "I am afraid—I was afraid—perhaps you wouldn't understand me. I was glad of all these things ;—and then, I thought, I was so glad that I knew about Jesus; and that I am His child ; and that He has given me all these other things to be glad about, and this work to do for Sarah ! "

There was a profound silence for a minute or two. Judy was astonished out of speech ; David, perhaps, disgusted. Norton was a little proud that Matilda had independence enough to dare to speak out, even if he chafed a little under the subject of her plain speaking. The elder ladies looked at one another with an odd expression in their eyes. When Mrs Lloyd spoke she went back to the practical question.

"How much money do you expect it will take to do what you want for these poor people, Matilda ? "

"I don't know, ma'am, yet. My teacher will find out and tell me."

"Is it your teacher who has suggested the plan ? "

"The plan ?—oh no, ma'am," said Matilda. "It is my plan. I have been talking him into it."

"Who is he ?" Mrs Lloyd asked.

"Mr Wharncliffe."

"What Wharncliffe ? Is he any connection of General Wharncliffe ? "

"His brother," said Norton.

This seemed, Matilda did not know why, to give satisfaction to her elders. Mrs Lloyd went on with an unbent face.

"How much money have you got, Matilda, to work with ? "

"Not a great deal, ma'am ; I have saved a little. It won't take such a *very* great deal to get all I want. It is only common things."

"Saved ! " Judy burst out. "Saved ! Now we have got

at it. *This is the secret. This is why we are such good temperance people and think it's wicked to buy liqueur glasses. Oh yes ! we save our money that way, no doubt."*

"Judy," said her brother, "I'm ashamed of you."

"No need," said Judy, coolly. "Keep it for yourself, next occasion."

"What is all this ?" said Mrs Lloyd.

"Nothing that had better go any further," said Mrs Laval. "Nothing of any consequence, mother."

"It is of no consequence," said Judy, "because David and Norton made it up."

"And Judy didn't," said Norton.

"Not I ; it was your affair," said the young lady. "My connections are not given to saving."

"That is very true indeed !" exclaimed Mrs Bartholomew, bursting out into a laugh ; "and you, Judy, least of all your 'connections.'"

"But what is all this ?" repeated Mrs Lloyd, seeing that the faces around her were moved by very various sorts of expression. It had to come out. Judy and Norton told the story between them, with some difficulty. Matilda felt very sorry, and very doubtful of the effect. David looked exceedingly dissatisfied. Mrs Lloyd listened with unchanged gravity.

"There ! you may call it what you like," Judy said, in conclusion. "But I like to have things go by their right names."

"It wouldn't be always best for you," said her brother.

"Do you think it is wrong, my dear, to drink wine ?" Mrs Lloyd asked, addressing Matilda.

Matilda did not well know what to answer. She, a child, what business had she to "think" anything about the right or the wrong of things done by people so much older and wiser than herself ? And yet, that did not change the truth, and the truth was what she must answer.

"I have promised not to do it," she said, almost shrinkingly.

"That affects your own drinking or not drinking. Do you think it is wrong for other people ?"

Again Matilda hesitated. She would have welcomed almost any interruption of Judy's ; but this time Judy kept as still as a mouse. And so did everybody else. Matilda's colour came and went.

"If you please, ma'am," she said at last, "I don't want to say what you will think rude."

"I will not think it rude," said Mrs Lloyd, with a little laugh. "I want to know what notion such a child as you has got in her head. *Do you think it is wrong?*"

"Yes, ma'am," Matilda answered, softly.

"Hear her!" cried Judy. "She has got an idea that wine is money in another form, and heavy to drink."

Matilda thought that Judy had unwittingly put her very meaning into the words ; but she did not say so.

"My dear," said Mrs Lloyd, "I have drunk wine all my life. It has never hurt me."

Matilda was silent.

"Is that your notion, that it is unwholesome?"

"No, ma'am."

"What then?"

"People take too much of it," said Matilda, "and it ruins them ; and if all good people would let it alone, wouldn't it help to make the rest let it alone?"

"Insufferable piggishness!" said Mrs Bartholomew. "You must excuse me, Zara. I hope you will teach your adopted child better manners, and get rid of a little of this superb folly."

"I am not so sure about the folly," said Mrs Laval.

"I am sure about the manners," said Mrs Lloyd. "She has said nothing but what I have made her say. Now, my dear, you have fulfilled your part of the bargain between us, and I will do my part."

The old lady produced a gold five dollar piece from her purse, and put it in Matilda's hand. Then drawing the child kindly towards her, she added—

"And from this time you must call me grandmamma, will you? as the others do ; and I will call you my grandchild."

She kissed the astonished Matilda, and the subject was dismissed, at least by the elders. The young people did not so easily let it drop. No sooner were they by themselves than Judy held forth in a long tirade about "presumption," and "artfulness," and "underhand ways;" waxing warm as she went on ; till Norton was provoked to answer, and the debate between them grew hot. Matilda said never a word, nor did David ; she kept outwardly very quiet ; but an hour after, if anybody could have seen her he would have seen a little figure cuddled down in a corner of her own room and weeping abundant tears. So ended the Christmas Sunday and the Christmas festival.

CHAPTER IV.

THERE were too many pleasant things on hand for Judy's behaviour to have any very lasting effect on Matilda's spirits, besides that a good share of independence was one of her valuable characteristics. With the new light of Monday morning, her heart leapt up anew at thought of all the comfort preparing for Sarah, and at her growing stock of means for the same. She got out her purse and counted her money. With the new gold piece there was a nice little sum ; not enough, indeed, but Matilda had hopes of David, and hopes floating and various that somehow what was needful would be forthcoming when the time came.

The week was about half gone, when one afternoon David came to Matilda's door and knocked. Matilda had shut herself up to write a letter to Maria, and opened the door to David with a good deal of surprise and pleasure. The second time, this was. He came in and sat down.

"Where do you think I have been ?" said he.

"To see Sarah ?" said Matilda, eagerly.

"You are quick," said David, smiling. "No, I have not been to see Sarah exactly ; but I have been to see where she lives and all about her."

"Did you see where she lives ?"

"Yes."

"David, isn't it horrid ?"

"It's disgusting !" said David.

"But she can't help it," said Matilda, again eagerly.

"No, she can't ; but somebody ought to help it. There ought not to be any such horror possible in such a city as this."

"So I think. But *who* ought to help it, David ? How could anybody help it ?"

"There used to be a way among my people," said the boy, proudly. "The corners of the cornfields, and the last of the grapes on the vines, and the dropped ears of corn, and the last beatings of the olives, were commanded to be left for the poor."

"But there are no vines nor cornfields nor olives *here*," said Matilda.

"Nothing so good," replied David. "I believe people grow wicked in cities."

"Then do you think it is wicked to build cities?"

"I don't know about that," said David; "that's another matter. Without cities a great many good things would be impossible."

"Would they? what?" said Matilda.

"Well, commerce, you know; without great centres of commerce, there could not be great commerce; and there would not be great fortunes then; and without great fortunes there could not be the grand things in music and painting and sculpture and architecture and books that there are now."

What "great centres of commerce" might be, Matilda could not tell; and she did not like to ask David too many questions. She suddenly came out with an objection.

"But Abraham did not live in a city?"

David started, looked at her, and then laughed a little.

"Abraham! no, he did not; and he was a rich man; but one rich man here and there could not do those things I spoke of."

"Then, wouldn't it be better there should be no cities?" said Matilda.

"Better than what? Better than have cities with such dreadful poor people? Can't have the good without the bad, I suppose."

"You said, people grow wicked in cities?"

"Well, they do."

"Then ought people to build cities?"

"I don't know how the world would get on at that rate," said David, smiling. "Anyhow, the cities are built;

and we are living in one ; and one corner house in it gives you and me as much as we can do."

"A single room in it, David."

"Yes. Well, you know you consulted a witch the other night."

"Did I ?" said Matilda.

"The witch gave me orders to search into your matter. I have done it, and told her what I had found ; and she has commissioned me to deliver to you—this."

So saying, David produced a little gold piece, the very mate to the one Matilda had earned by telling her thoughts.

"O David !" Matilda exclaimed, " O David ! "

"Well ?" said David, smiling. "What ?"

"I am getting so much !"

"You will want it."

"But I don't see how it should take such a *very* great deal of money just to do this little thing," said Matilda ; and she went on to explain Mr Wharncliffe's propositions and helping agency. Before she had well got through, Norton dashed in.

"Hallo ! David here ? All the better. Isn't she a jewel of a witch, David ?"

David looked up with a responsive twinkle in his eye ; and Matilda asked what he meant.

"Mean ?" said Norton, "I mean the witch. You went to see the witch, Pink ; haven't you heard from her ?"

"Yes ! just this minute ; but, Norton, I don't know what you expected to hear. What have you heard ?"

"Glorious !" cried Norton, swinging his cap joyously. "We've got that little room, Pink, for a greenhouse ; and a stove in it for cold nights ; and shelves and benches and frames and all those things I 'll put up myself ; and then we 'll have a show of flowers. Your hyacinths will do a great deal better up there."

"Will they ?" said Matilda. "They are doing very nicely here ; and they look nicely."

"Now we can do all we have a mind to, Pink. I 'll have some amaryllis roots right off ; and japonicas, *japonicas*,

Pink ; and everything you like. Geraniums, and bouvardias, and azaleas, and cacti, and cyclamens, and cassia, and arbutilon. Fuchsias too, and what you like ! ”

“ Why, that little room will not hold everything,” said Matilda. “ Can’t you have some roses ? ”

“ Roses ? Oh yes, and carnations ; everything you like. Yes, it will hold everything. Lots of tulips, too.”

“ How about the money ? ” David asked.

“ It don’t take a fortune to stock a little greenhouse.”

“ You haven’t got a fortune.”

“ I have got enough.”

“ Have you anything left for other objects ? ”

“ What objects ? ” said Norton. “ I haven’t but one object at present. One’s enough.”

“ But Matilda has an object too,” David said, smiling enough to show his white teeth ; “ and her object will want some help, I’m thinking.”

“ What object ? ” said Norton.

“ Don’t you remember ? I told you, Norton, about Sarah”—

“ Oh, *that* ! ” said Norton, with a perceptible fall of his mental thermometer. “ That’s all your visions, Pink ; impracticable ; fancy. The idea of you, with your little purse, going into the mud of New York, and thinking to clean the streets.”

“ Certainly,” said David, “ and so she wants a little help from our purses, don’t you see ? ”

“ David Bartholomew ! ” Norton burst out, “ you know as well as I do, that it is no sort of use to try that game. Just go look at the mud ; it will take all we could throw into it, and never show.”

“ No,” said David ; “ we could clear up a little corner, I think, if we tried.”

“ *You* ! ” cried Norton. “ *Are you* at that game ? You turned soft suddenly ? ”

“ Do no harm, that I see,” replied David, composedly.

“ These people aren’t your people,” said Norton.

“ They are your people,” said David.

"They are not ! I have nothing to do with them, and it is no use—Davy Bartholomew, you *know* it's no use—to try to help them. Pink is so tender-hearted, she wants to help the whole world ; and it's all very well for her to want it; but she can't; and I can't; and you can't."

"But we can help Sarah Staples," Matilda ventured.

"And then you may go on to help somebody else, and then somebody else ; and there's no end to it ; only there's this end, that you'll always be poor yourself, and never be able to do anything you want to do."

Norton was unusually heated, and both his hearers were for a moment silenced.

"You know that's the truth of it, Davy," he went on ; "and it's no use to encourage Pink to fancy she can comfort everybody that's in trouble, and warm everybody that is cold, and feed everybody that is hungry ; because she just can't do it. You can tell her there is *no end* to that sort of thing if she once tries it on. Suppose we all went to work at it. Just see where we would be. Where would be Pink's gold watch, and her picture ? and where would be her gold bracelet ? and where would my greenhouse be ? and where would this house be, for that matter ? and the furniture in it ? and how should we all dress ? Your mother wouldn't wear velvet dresses that you like so much; and mine wouldn't wear that flimsy muslin stuff that she likes so much ; and grandmamma's lace shawl would never have been mended, for it never would have been here to get burnt. It's all a lot of nonsense, that's what it is."

"There is law about it, though," David began again, gravely.

"Law ?" Norton echoed.

"The law of my people."

"Oh, what is it, David ?" cried Matilda; while Norton was grumly silent. He did not want to debate David's Jewish law with him. David gave the words very readily.

"When there is with thee any needy one of one of thy brethren, in one of thy cities, in thy land which Jehovah thy God is giving to thee, thou dost not harden thy heart,

nor shut thy hand from thy needy brother ; for thou dost certainly open thy hand to him, and dost certainly lend him sufficient for his lack which he lacketh.’”

“That says what the people would do—not what they ought to do,” said Norton.

“I beg your pardon ; it is a strong way of saying, in the Hebrew, what they *must* do. Listen. ‘Thou dost certainly give to him, and thy heart is not sad in thy giving to him, for because of this thing doth Jehovah thy God bless thee in all thy works, and in every putting forth of thine hand ; because the needy one doth not cease out of the land, therefore I am commanding thee, saying, Thou dost certainly open thy hand to thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy one, in thy land.’”

Matilda was thinking of other words, which she dared not bring forward ; being in a part of her Bible which David did not like. Neither was it necessary. Norton had got quite enough, she could see. He was in a state of fume, privately.

“I am going to give one side of the greenhouse to you,” he said, turning to Matilda. “Now, you have got to think and find out what you will put in it. I shall have the shelves and all ready by the end of the week ; and next week, Pink—next week !—we must put the plants in ; because the winter is going on, you know.”

The conclave broke up, to go up-stairs and look at the new greenhouse. Norton explained his arrangements ; the oil-cloth he was going to put on the floor, the rising banks of green shelves, the watering and syringing and warming of the little place, till Matilda almost smelt the geranium leaves before they were there.

“Now, Pink, what will you have on your side ?”

“I can’t give more than a dollar to it, Norton,” said Matilda, very regrettfully.

“A dollar ! A *dollar*, Pink ? A dollar will get you two or three little geraniums. What’s to become of the rest of your shelves ?”

“I shall have to give them back to you, I’m afraid.”

"You've got money, plenty?"

"But I can't spend it for plants."

"Because you are going to throw it into the mud, Pink? Oh, no, you'll not do that. I'll give you a catalogue of plants, and you shall look it over; and you will find a dollar won't do much, I can tell you. And then you will see what you want."

He was as good as his word; and Matilda sipped her glass of water and ate her sponge-cake at tea-time between the pages of a fascinating pamphlet, which, with the delights it offered, almost took away her breath, and quite took away the taste of the sponge-cake. Norton looked over her shoulder now and then, well pleased to see his charm working.

"Yellow carnations?" cried Matilda.

"I don't like them best, though," said Norton. "There, that—La purité—that's fine; and the striped ones, Pink; those double heads, just as full as they can be, and just as sweet as they can be, and brilliant carmine and white—those are what I like."

Matilda drew a long breath and turned a leaf.

"Violets!" she exclaimed.

"Do you like them?"

"Violets? Why, Norton, I don't like anything better! I don't think I do. Dear little sweet things! *they* do not cost much!"

"No," said Norton, "they do not cost much; and they don't make much show neither."

"But they don't take much room."

"No; and you want things that *do* take room, to fill your shelves. The greenhouse ought to be all one mass of green and bloom all round."

Matilda heaved another sigh and turned another leaf.

"I don't know anything about tuberoses," she said. "Primroses? what are they like? 'A thousand flowers often from one plant!' what are they like, Norton?"

"Like?" said Norton. "I don't know what they are like."

"I'll tell you," said Judy, who, as usual, was pleasing herself with a cup of strong coffee ; "they are like buttercups come to town and grown polished."

"They are not in the least like buttercups!" said Norton.

"That's what I said," replied Judy, coolly ; "they have left off their country ways, and don't wear yellow dresses."

Matilda thought it was best to take no notice, so with another crumb of sponge-cake she turned over to the next flower in the catalogue.

"What are bouvardias? I don't know anything about them."

"Of course," said Judy ; "not to be expected."

"Do you want to take care of your own flowers yourself, Pink?" inquired Norton ; "or do you mean to have me do it?"

"Why, I will do it, I suppose."

"Then you had better leave the bouvardias to me. They are a little particular about some things."

"Are they handsome?"

"Wait till you see. Splendid! You'll see, when I get them a-going. We'll have just a blaze of them."

"A blaze?" said Matilda. "What colour?"

"Flame colour, and scarlet, and white, and splendid crimson."

"Heliotrope—oh, I like heliotrope!" Matilda went on.

"You can have those," said Norton. "They're sweet and easy; and we must have them, of course, on one side or the other. Begonias—those you might have, too."

"Hyacinths I have got," said Matilda.

"Yes, but you will want more, now that you have room for them."

"Azaleas—oh, azaleas are lovely," said Matilda. "They are showy too; and you want a show, Norton."

"So do you, Pink."

"Well, I like azaleas," said Matilda. "Do they cost much?"

"Not so very. I guess you can have some."

"Oh, what a geranium!" Matilda exclaimed. "'Lady James Vick'—'seventy-five cents each'—but what a lovely colour, Norton! Oh, I like geraniums next best to roses, I believe."

"You must go to another catalogue for your roses," said Norton.

"That is beautiful! I never saw such a colour. These roses are better yet."

"You can't have roses enough in bloom at once. We want other things to help make up the blaze of colour there ought to be. But that's easy."

Matilda turned the catalogue over and over with a disturbed mind. It seemed to her that to have such a little greenhouse as Norton proposed, full of beauties, would be one of the most enjoyable things that could be. Every new page of the catalogue, every new detail of Norton's plan, tugged at her heart-strings. She wanted to get those plants and flowers. A few delicate tea roses, some crimson blush roses, some pots of delicious purple heliotropes with spicy breath; two or three—or four—great double carnations; bunches of violets, sweetest of all; she wanted these! Then some azaleas, larger of course, to fill up the shelves and make a beautiful show of colour, as Norton desired. Her imagination went over and over the catalogue, always picking these out for her choice; and then imagination took them to the little room up-stairs which was going to be such a lovely little greenhouse, and saw them there and almost smelt their fragrance. It would be so pleasant to take care of them; she fancied herself watering them and dressing them, picking off the dead leaves and tying up the long wreaths of vines, and putting flowers into Mrs Laval's stem glass for her dressing-table. But what use? she had not the money to buy the plants, if she went on with her plans for Sarah's behoof; no counting nor calculating could come to any other conclusion. She thought of it by day and she thought of it by night; and the more she thought, the more her desires grew. Then, too, the wish to please Norton was a very serious element in her cogitations. To disappoint

him by utterly failing to do all he wished and counted upon from her, was very hard to do and very disagreeable to face. But Sarah? Matilda could not change her line of action, nor divert more than one dollar from the fund saved for her benefit. One dollar, Matilda thought, might be given for flowers; but what would one dollar be worth, with all one side of the little greenhouse to be filled?

It is not easy to tell how much trouble all this question gave Matilda. She thought it was quite strange and notable, that just when she was trying to accomplish so right a thing as the helping of that poor family in the cellar, this temptation of flowers should come up to make it hard. In one of her windows stood three little pots, in which three hyacinths were already bursting through the brown earth and showing little stout green points of leaf-buds which promised nicely for other buds by and by. They had been a delight to Matilda's heart only a week ago; now, it seemed as if that vision of heliotropes and roses and geraniums had somehow swallowed them up.

When she went next to Sunday-school, however, and saw Sarah's meek, patient face, Matilda was very much astonished at herself, and not a little ashamed. She sat next Sarah in the class, and could see, without seeming to see, how thin her dress was, and how limp it was, as if she had not enough petticoats under it to keep her warm. There was a patch, too, in one place. And Sarah's shawl was a very poor wrap alongside of the well-covered shoulders, under Matilda's thick cloak. "No gloves!" said Matilda to herself, as her eye glanced from her own very handsome and warm ones; "how can she bear it? I wonder how it makes her feel to see mine? Another time I'll wear an older pair." But the contrast went home to Matilda's heart. Why should she have so many good things, and Sarah so few? and the words David had quoted from the Hebrew Scriptures came back to her.

With an odd feeling as if there were wrong done for which she was somehow chargeable, after the lesson was done and school dismissed she asked Sarah "how she was?" The

girl's meek eye brightened a little as she answered that she was well.

"But you are hoarse," said Matilda. "You have got cold."

"Oh, I often do, in the winter time," said Sarah. "I don't think anything of it."

And that slight shawl and thin dress ! Matilda's heart gave some painful blows to her conscience.

"I didn't see you at your place the other day," she went on.

"That was Thursday," said Sarah. "No; I was too bad Thursday. I didn't go out."

So she staid at home to nurse her cold, in that cellar-room with the mud floor. What sort of comfort could be had there ? or what good of nursing ? Matilda did not wonder that the street corner was quite as pleasant and nearly as profitable. And the thought of Sarah's gentle, pale face as she said those words so went home to her heart, that she was crying half the way home ; tears of sorrow and sympathy running down her face, as fast as she wiped them away.

That same evening, at tea-time, Norton asked if she had made up her list of plants for the greenhouse ? Matilda said, "No."

"We shall want them now, Pink. By Wednesday I shall have the staging ready ; and the sooner we get it filled the better."

"Oh, but—dear Norton," said Matilda, "I am very sorry to disappoint you ; but I cannot take the money."

"Can't take what money ?"

"The money to buy those plants. I would like them ; but I cannot."

"But you were making your list," said Norton.

"No, I wasn't. I was only thinking what I would *like* to have."

"And you are not going to come into the greenhouse at all ?"

That was more than Matilda had counted upon ; the tears started to her eyes ; but she only said—

"I cannot get the plants, Norton ;" and she said it steadily.

"You are going into that ridiculous charitable concern?" Matilda was beyond answering just then; she kept silence.

"Let *me* into your greenhouse, Norton," said Judy.

"Yes; fine work you would make there," Norton replied.

"Indeed I would. I'll fill my shelves with just the finest things we can get; camellias, if you like; and the newest geraniums, and everything."

"You wouldn't take care of them if you had them."

"Well, you would," said Judy; "and it comes to the same thing."

"Pink," said Norton, "I must have my shelves full; and I can't do it all. If you won't come into the greenhouse, I shall let Judy come."

"Well, Norton," said Matilda, steadily; "if you knew what I know, and if you had seen what I have seen, you wouldn't wonder at me; and I almost think you would help me."

"You'll grow wiser," said Norton, "when you have had your fingers burned a few times."

The tone of cool indifference to *her* subjects of interest, of slight displeasure at her preferring them to his, went to Matilda's heart. So also it tried her greatly, to see for the rest of the evening Norton and Judy in high confabulation over the catalogues and the greenhouse. She felt shut out from it, and a little from Norton himself. It was hard to bear; and once and again she could not help the tears rising to her eyes. She got rid of them, she thought, cleverly, without any one being the wiser; but David Bartholomew had marked it all. He had not said a word, however; and Matilda went early up to bed; marvelling anew that it should be so difficult to do right. Why must this greenhouse business come up just at this moment?

She had a week to think about it and grieve over it. The boys were going to school again, now, and she saw but little of them. Judy had masters and mistresses, and was herself much out of sight. Matilda was to be under Nor-

ton's tutelage, it had been agreed ; and accordingly he had put certain books in her hands and pointed out certain tasks ; and Matilda laid hold of them with great zeal. With so much, indeed, that difficulties, if there were any, disappeared ; and Norton had little to do beyond finding out that she was, as he expressed it, "all right," and giving her new work for the next day. So went the week ; very busy, and very happy too, only for Matilda's being shut out from greenhouse pleasures, and Judy taken into Norton's partnership.

CHAPTER V.

BUT the next Sunday had a new joy for her. Mr Wharncliffe informed her, after school-time, that he had found a lodging which he thought would do nicely for her poor friends. All Matilda's troubles fled away like mist before the sun, and her face lighted up as if the very sun itself had been shining into it. Mr Wharncliffe went on to tell her about the lodgings. It was near, but not in, that miserable quarter of the city where Sarah and her mother now lived. It was not in a tenement house either ; but in a little dwelling owned by an Irishman and his wife, who seemed decent people. He was a mechanic, and one room of their small house they were accustomed to let, to help to pay their rent.

“Is it furnished, Mr Wharncliffe ?”

“No ; entirely bare.”

“How large is it ?”

“Small. Not so large by one-third as the room where they are living now.”

“Can I go and see it ?”

“Yes, there is no difficulty about that. I will go with you to-morrow, if you like.”

“And how much is the rent, Mr Wharncliffe ?”

“One dollar a week. The woman was willing to let the room to Mrs Staples, because I was making the bargain and understood to be security for her ; only so.”

“Then we will go to-morrow, sir, shall we, and see the room, and see what it wants ? and perhaps you will show me that place where you said I could get furniture cheap.”

This was agreed upon. To Matilda’s very great surprise, David, when he heard her news, said he would go too. She half expected he would get over the notion by the time he

got home from school on Monday ; but no ; he said he wanted a walk, and he would see the place with her.

The place was humble enough. A poor little house, that looked as if its more aspiring neighbours would certainly swallow it up and deny its right to be at all ; so low and decrepit it was, among better built if not handsome edifices. Street and surroundings were dingy and mean. However, when they went in, they found a decent little room under the sloping roof, and with a bit of blue sky visible from its dormer window. It was empty and bare.

"Thin, we always has rispectable lodgers," said the good woman, who had taken her arms out of a tub of soapsuds to accompany the party up-stairs ; "and the room is a very daacent apartment entirely ; and warrm it is, and *quite*. An' we had a company o' childhren in one o' the houses adjoinin', that bothered the life out o' me wid their hollerin' as soon as ever we histed the winders in the summer-time ; but the father he died, and the mother, she was a poor kind of a body that couldn't seem to get along no ways at all at all ; and I believe she thried, an' she didn't succeed, the poor craythur ! an' she just faded away, like, and whin she couldn't stan' no longer, she was tuk away to the 'spital ; and the chillen was put in the poor-us, or I don't just know what it is they calls the place ; and it was weary for them, but it was a good day for meself at the same time. An' the place is iligant and *quite* now, sir. An' whin will the lady move in, that you're wantin' the room for ?"

"As soon as it can be ready for her, Mrs Leary."

"Thin it's ready ! What would it be wantin' ?"

"We shall need to move in some furniture, I suppose, and a little coal. Where will that go ?"

"Coal, is it ? Sure, there's the cellar. An' an iligant cellar it is, and dhry, and places enough for to put her coal in. It'll hould all she'll want, I'll engage."

"It holds yours too, I suppose."

"Why wouldn't it ? But we'll never interfare for that ; small wisdom !"

Mr Wharncliffe chose to go down and see the cellar.

David and Matilda spent the time in consultation. Mr Wharncliffe came back alone.

"Well," he said, "how do you like it?"

"Very much; but, Mr Wharncliffe, it is not very clean."

"Sarah will soon change that."

"Sarah? Won't her mother help?"

"Mrs Staples is unable for hard work. She has had illness which has disabled her; and I fancy the damp cellar she has been living in has made matters worse. But Sarah likes to be as clean as she can."

"Well, she can now," said Matilda, gleefully. "Mr Wharncliffe, don't you think they want a little bit of a carpet?"

Mr Wharncliffe shook his head. "They are not accustomed to it; they do not need it, Matilda. You will have enough to do with your money."

"At any rate, they must have a bureau, mustn't they?"

"There is a wall-cupboard," said Mr Wharncliffe. "That will be wanted, I suppose, for crockery and stores. What would a bureau be useful for?"

"Clothes."

"They have not a drawer-full between them."

"But they will have? They *must*, Mr Wharncliffe. I am going to get them some. Mayn't I?"

Mr Wharncliffe looked round the little room, and smiled as he looked at Matilda again. "There is a great deal to do with your money, I told you," he said. "Let us reckon up the indispensable things first." He took out his notebook.

"Coals are one thing," said Matilda. "They must have some coals to begin with."

"Coals," repeated Mr Wharncliffe, noting it down.

"Have they a stove that will do?"

"I am afraid not. I will try and find a second-hand one."

"A table, and two or three chairs."

Those went down in the list.

"And, O Mr Wharncliffe, a tea-kettle! And something to cook meat in, and boil potatoes."

"What do you know about cooking meat and boiling potatoes?" Mr Wharncliffe asked, looking amused. "Those things will perhaps come with the stove; and at any rate do not cost much."

"And then some decent plates, and cups, and saucers, and common knives, you know, and a few such things."

"They have some things which they use now. You must not try to do too much. Remember, there are other people who want bread."

"Well, not those things then, if you think not," said Matilda. "But a bedstead, and a comfortable bed, Mr Wharncliffe; *that* they must have."

"How about the two boys?"

"They must have another."

"Blankets and sheets and pillows?"

"Yes, sir; and pillow-cases. I can make those. Do they cost a great deal?"

"I think not, if you will let me buy them."

"Oh, thank you, sir! I have got money enough, I guess."

"Mrs Staples will make them. But, my dear, coals, and a stove, and table, and chairs, and bedstead, and bedding, will make a hole in your little stock. Let us see. I will undertake the stove and the coals, and get your beds for you. Chairs and table and bedding, I leave to you."

"Then put down some cups and plates, please, sir; or I will make the list when I go home."

"We can manage it, I think," said David. "You know, I am bound to come in for my share. Where can we get this second-hand furniture?"

Mr Wharncliffe led the way to the place. What a disagreeable place, Matilda thought. Dirty, dusty, confused, dilapidated, worn; at least such was the look of a majority of the articles gathered there. However, therein lay their advantage; and presently, in the eagerness of hunting out the things that she wanted, Matilda half lost sight of the uncomfortable character of her surroundings. A table,

strong yet, though its paint was all gone, and chairs of similar qualifications, were soon secured. A bedstead, too, which was quite respectable ; and Mr Wharncliffe explained that some bed-tickings could be filled with straw, for beds and pillows. A little chest of drawers with some difficulty was found, to be had for a few shillings ; and a stove. Now this last gave Matilda unlimited satisfaction ; for it was a tidy little stove, had two or three cooking utensils belonging to it, and an oven which the shopman assured them would bake "first rate." In that stove and hardware Matilda's fancy seemed to see whole loads of comfort for Sarah and her mother. A happy child was she when they left the shop.

"I believe that is all we can do this afternoon, Tilly," said her friend.

"Yes, sir. I think we have done a great deal. I thank you, sir."

He smiled and turned off to go his way alone ; while David, who had been much struck with the sweet gracefulness of Matilda's manner, walked beside her ; thinking, perhaps, that Mrs Laval's adopted child was a different person from what he had thought.

"What shall *I* do, now, Matilda ?" he asked presently.

"I don't know. O David ! I am very much obliged to you for coming with me."

"That won't help your poor people though," said he, smiling. "What more do you want to do, or to get for them ?"

"Something to make a decent dress or two," Matilda said, confidentially ; "but I can do that myself. I don't know, David ; things puzzle me. Mr Wharncliffe says I must not try to do too much, because there are other poor people that suffer, and want the money."

"There are so many, that all your money is but a very little drop on a great desert, Matilda."

"But that one drop will make one spot of the desert better, David."

"Yes."

"Just a little—twenty or thirty dollars—will do a great deal for these poor people. And then, if Sarah learns to work on a machine, you know, and she and her mother get better pay and better work, they will be able to take care of themselves for ever after."

"That's good sense," said David. "But just think of all that row of tenement houses."

"David," said Matilda, solemnly, "don't you think it is wrong?"

"What?"

"That people should be so poor, and live in such places?"

"I suppose it is people's own fault, a good deal."

"But no, very often it isn't. Now, Mrs Staples used to be a great deal better off; but her husband died, and she got unwell, and so she came down to this."

"But where is the wrong, then?" said David.

"Why, just think how much money there is, and what it might do if people tried. Suppose everybody did *all he could*, David? Suppose every one did all he could?"

"As you are doing. But then where should we stop?"

"I wouldn't stop, till everybody that wasn't wicked was comfortable."

"No, no. I mean, where would you stop in your own giving or spending?"

"I don't know," said Matilda, looking down on the ground, and thinking very hard as she walked. "I'll tell you, David, I think the money ought to go to whoever wants it most!"

"Who is to settle that?" said David, laughing.

They had got into deep waters of Christian ethics; and it was no wonder if even the theory of navigation was difficult. It served them for matter of busy discussion till they arrived at home. Norton and Judy were just consulting over some greenhouse plants in the hall. It gave Matilda no pang. She passed them with her own little heart so full of pleasure that seemed far richer and sweeter, that she thought there was no comparison.

The pleasure lasted; for in a day or two there came a

great package for Matilda, which turned out to be the sheeting and muslin Mr Wharncliffe had promised to get for her. Matilda had to explain what all this coarse stuff meant, coming to Mrs Lloyd's elegant mansion ; and Mrs Laval then, amused enough, let her maid cut out the sheets and pillow-cases which Matilda desired to make ; and for days thereafter Matilda's room looked like a workshop. She was delightfully busy. Her lessons took a good deal of time, and were eagerly attended to ; and then, at any hour of the day when she was free, Matilda might have been found sitting on a low seat and stitching away at one end of a mass of coarse unbleached cloth, which lay on the floor. Mrs Laval looked in at her and laughed at her ; sometimes came and sat there with her. Matilda was in great state ; with her workbox by her side, and her watch in her bosom warning her when it was time to leave off work and get ready to go downstairs.

She was busy as usual one afternoon, when she was summoned down to see company ; and found, with a strange delight, that it was her two sisters. Mrs Laval had received them very kindly, and now gave Matilda permission to take them up to her room, where, as she said, they could have a good talk and no interruption. So upstairs they all three went. Matilda had hardly spoken to them till they were in her room and the door shut. Then at first they sat down and used their eyes.

"What in the world are you doing ?" said Anne. "Do they make you the seamstress of the family ?"

"Seamstress ? O Anne ! I am doing this for myself."

"Do you sleep on sheets like that ?" said Letitia, inquisitively. "They don't, I'll be bound."

"Sheets ? what do you mean ? O Letty ! I am not doing these for *myself*."

"You said you were."

"For myself—yes, in a way. I mean, I am doing this work for my own pleasure ; not for my own bed. It is for some poor people."

"For some poor people," Letty repeated. "I think Mrs

Laval might have let one of her servants do it, if she wanted to be charitable, or hire it done, even ; and not save a penny by setting you at it."

"She did not set me at it," said Matilda, in despair. "Oh, you don't understand. She has nothing to do with it at all."

"Are these yours, then ?"

"Yes."

"You bought them and paid for them ?"

"Yes. At least, a friend bought them for me, but I am going to pay him the money back."

"Is it your own money ?"

"Why yes, Anne ; whose should it be ?"

"So you have more than you want, and can actually throw it away ?"

"Not throw it away, Anne ; for these people, that these sheets are for, are miserably off. You would think so, if you saw them."

"I don't want to see anybody worse off than myself," said Letitia. "Why, what is that the child has got in her bosom, hanging to that ribband ? What is it ?—a watch, I declare ! Gold ? is it a gold watch really ? Think of it, Anne !"

"It was one of my Christmas presents," said poor Matilda, hardly knowing what to say.

"How many other presents did you have ?"

Matilda had to tell, though she had a feeling it would not be to the gratification of her sisters. They listened and looked, said little, but by degrees drew out from her all the history of the evening's entertainment.

"That's the way *she* lives," said Letitia to Anne. "That's the way *she* is going on ; while you and I are making people's dresses."

"But aren't you getting on well ?" asked their little sister, sorely bestead to make the conversation pleasant to them.

"We get work, and we do it," said Letitia ; "and so make out to have some bread and butter with our tea."

"But you have dinner, don't you ?"

"I don't know what you'd call it," said Letitia. "What do you have for dinner ?"

"Oh ! the boys and Judy Bartholomew and I, we have our dinner at one o'clock."

"Well, what do you *have*?" said Letitia, sharply. "What did you have to-day?"

"We had beefsteak."

"Not all alone, I suppose. What did you have with it?"

"We had oysters," said Matilda unwillingly, "and baked potatoes, and rice, and bananas and oranges."

"There!" exclaimed Letitia. "That's what I call a dinner. What do you suppose Anne and I had?"

"Hush, Letty," said Anne. "Whatever we had, it was our own. We were beholden to nobody for it."

"Have you seen Maria since I have?" Matilda asked, trying to make a diversion.

"No. How should we see Maria? We cannot go jaunting about. We have our work to do."

"But it is nice work. I should think you would be very glad to have it," Matilda ventured.

"Yes, we are, of course," said Anne expressively. "People must live. How much did your watch cost?"

Very unwillingly Matilda named the sum which Norton had told her. The two sisters looked at each other and rose to depart.

"But you are not going?" cried Matilda. "You haven't said anything to me yet. And I have not seen you for ever so long."

"We could not say anything that would be interesting to you," Anne answered. "And we have to keep at our work, you know. We are busy."

"So am I busy," said Matilda, "very, with my lessons and my other things I have to do."

"And parties," added Letitia, "and poor people. How were you dressed at the party, Matilda?"

"Yes, let us see your dress," said Anne, sitting down again.

They scanned and measured and examined the dress, stuff and work, with business as well as with curious eyes; Matilda saw they were taking hints from it. That led to the display of her whole wardrobe. It was not agreeable to Matilda;

she had a certain feeling that it was not improving her sisters' peculiar mood of feeling towards her ; however, it seemed to be the one way in which she could afford them any the least pleasure. So silks and poplins and muslins, all her things, were brought out and turned over ; the fashion and the work minutely examined and commented on ; the price detailed where Matilda happened to know it.

"Well, I have got something from that," said Anne, when at last the show was done.

"Yes," echoed Letitia ; "I never could make out before just how that sort of trimming was managed. Now I have got it."

They pulled up their cloaks again and tied their scarfs. Matilda looked on sorrowfully.

"I suppose it's no use to ask you to come and see us," said Letty.

"I can't come often," Matilda answered, "because, you know, I cannot walk there ; and I cannot have the carriage except now and then."

"How do you suppose we get along without a carriage ?" said Letty.

"You are older. O Anne and Letty !" cried their little sister, "I don't know why I have so much and you have so little ; but it isn't my fault."

Tears were in her eyes ; but her sisters showed no melting on their part. They answered, that nobody supposed it was her fault. The energy of Matilda's hugs and kisses seemed to impress them, at last.

"Tell me !" said Anne, holding her off to look at her—"are you happy here? Do they treat you really as their own child? Would you like to come back to us? Because if you would—"

"Oh, no, no, Anne! yes, they do. Yes, I am very happy. I don't want anything but what I have got."

"Well, then, you are to be envied," said Anne, relapsing into her former tone ; and the two went away. Matilda saw them out of the front door, and then went back to her room and stood at the window a long time, looking down the

street by which they had gone. Why did they treat her so? Why was she such a trouble to them? They were much older than she, and her home sympathies had always been more particularly with Maria and her mother in the old days; yet the family had been affectionate and harmonious. The strange barrier which her prosperity had built up between her and them was quite inexplicable to Matilda. At the same time she was filled with sorrow for the contrast which she knew they felt between her circumstances and their own. She mused, how she could give them comfort or do them good in any way; but could not find it. She was a weak little child. And the help she was giving to the poor street-sweeper and her mother was more needed and better bestowed there than in any other direction. What would her small means avail towards the wants of Anne and Letitia? But Matilda cried about it some sore tears, as she stood by her window in the growing dusk. Then she went back to the joy of what was coming to Sarah and her mother through her instrumentality.

That joy grew sweeter and sweeter every day. The sheets and pillow-cases were finished. The furniture and the stove were moved in. The straw beds Mr Wharncliffe's care had provided were in readiness. David and Matilda went again to look at the room; and cold and dull though it was, with no fire in the stove, there was great promise of comfort.

"Now, David," said Matilda, after she had turned round and round, surveying every side and corner of the room again and again,—"*don't* you think we might put a little comfort inside that cupboard?"

"Of what sort?" said David, smiling.

"It's bare," said Matilda.

"Of everything."

"Yes. Well, of course, it wouldn't do to put any eatable things here, till just the day they are coming. O David! a thought has just struck me."

"Go on," said David, smiling again. "The thoughts that strike you are generally very good thoughts."

"Perhaps you will laugh at me. But I will tell you what I was thinking. Mr Wharncliffe says we must not do too much at once; but I *should* like, David, to have a nice little supper ready for them the day they move in. I don't suppose they have had one nice supper this winter."

"Broiled oysters and salad?" said David.

"No, indeed; you know what sort of a supper I mean."

"What would you get, for instance?"

"Let me see," said Matilda, speaking slowly and considering the matter intently. "Some tea there should be of course, and sugar, and milk; then some bread and butter—and herring—and perhaps a loaf of gingerbread."

"What made you think of herring?" said David, looking very much amused and curious.

"Oh, I know such people like them very much, and they cost almost nothing."

"If we are giving them a supper, I should say, give them something that costs a little more—something they could not get for themselves."

"Oh, these people don't get even herring, David."

"What do you suppose they live upon?"

"Bread,—and—I really don't know, David. In the country, they would have cheese, and sometimes fish, I suppose; but these people are too poor even for that."

"That's being poorer than anybody ought to be," said David, "I go in for the supper. It's fun. I tell you what, Tilly,—I'll stand a beefsteak."

"Oh! thank you, David! But—there are so many more that want it," said Matilda, looking sober and prudent in odd contrast with her years.

"We can't help them too," said David.

"Better keep the beefsteak, I guess," said Matilda. "O David, I know! Potatoes!"

"What of potatoes?"

"Just what they want. *Sure* to want them, you know; and exactly the thing. Let us have a good sack of potatoes."

David seemed to be so much amused that he could





" O David, stop ! they can make coffee in the tea-pot.' "

hardly keep to the practical soberness of the thing. However he agreed to the potatoes. And he and Matilda, moved by one impulse, set off for a hardware store down in one of the avenues, not far to seek ; and there spent a most delicious half hour. They chose some common cups and saucers and plates ; a yellow pitcher, a sugar bowl and one or two dishes ; half a dozen knives and forks and spoons. It was difficult to stop in their purchases, for the poor friends they were thinking of had nothing. So a tin teapot was added to the list.

"O David !" Matilda exclaimed again, " we ought to have some soap."

"I dare say," said David, dryly. "But we do not get that here."

"No ; but seeing that toilet soap put me in mind of it. We get that at the grocer's."

"It won't do for us to send in our grocer's stores just yet. When do your people come to take possession ?"

"Next week, I think. Oh, no ; not till the very day, David. Now is there anything else we ought to get here ?"

"I don't know," said David. "I could think of a great many things ; but, as you say, we must not do too much."

"What did you think of ?"

"Nearly everything you see here," said David. "It seems to me they must want everything. A coffee-pot, for instance, and lamps, and cooking utensils, and brooms, and brushes, and tubs, and coal-scuttles."

"O David, stop ! They can make coffee in the tea-pot."

"Bad for the coffee, I should say !" David responded, shrugging his shoulders.

"And lamps ? They cannot buy oil. I guess they go to bed when it grows dark."

"Do they ? Great loss of time for people who live by their labour."

"And a tea-kettle, and a frying-pan, and a water-pot came with the stove, you know."

"What can they cook in a frying pan, besides fish ?"

"Oh! a great many things. But they can't *get* the things, David; they don't want ways to cook them."

"Must be a bad thing to be so poor," said David.

"Mustn't it! And there are so many. It is dreadful."

"Don't seem to me it ought to be," said David.

"That is what I think," said Matilda. "And, O David! don't laugh at me as Norton does,—it seems to me it needn't be. If other people would do without having everything, these people need not want everything."

David did smile, though, at Matilda's summary way of equalising things.

"What would you be willing to go without?" he asked.
"Come, Tilly; what of all we have had to-day?"

"A great deal," said the little political economist, steadily.

"Meringues and bananas for instance?"

"Why, yes, David, and so would you, if it was to give somebody else a dinner."

But here they remembered that the shopman was still waiting their orders, and they left talking to attend to business. David began apparently to amuse himself. He bought a salt-cellar and a broom, and, to Matilda's mingled doubt and delight, a rocking-chair. And then they ordered the things home, and went home themselves.

CHAPTER VI.

THE arrangements were all made ; the room was ready ; the cupboard was stocked with its hardware ; even a carpet lay on the floor, for Mrs Lloyd, having heard from David a laughing declaration of Matilda's present longing for an old carpet, had immediately given permission to the children to rummage in the lumber-room and take anything they found that was not too good. Matilda was very much afraid there would be nothing that did not come under that description. However, a little old piece of carpet was found that somehow had escaped being thrown away, and that would be, she judged, a perfect treasure to Mrs Staples ; it was sent by the hands of a very much astonished footman to Mrs Leary's house, and by Mrs Leary herself put down on the floor ; Matilda having bargained for the cleaning of the floor as a preliminary.

Her imagination dwelt upon that carpet, and the furnished, comfortable look it gave the room, with as much recurring delight as other people often find in the thought of their new dresses and jewels. With more, perhaps. Everything was ready now. Mr Wharncliffe was engaged to tell the good news to Sarah and her mother, and the moving was to take place on Thursday of the next week. All was arranged ; and on Monday Matilda sickened.

What could be the matter ? Nobody knew at first ; only it was certain that the little girl was ill. Dull and feverish and miserable, unable to hold herself up, or to think much about anything when she was laid in bed. It was needful to send for the doctor ; and Mrs Laval took her station by Matilda's pillow.

How time went, for some days thereafter, Matilda but

dimly knew. She was conscious now and then of being very unwell, heavy, and oppressed, and hot ; but much of the time was spent in a sort of stupor. Occasionally she would wake up to see that Mrs Laval was bending tenderly over her, offering a spoonful of medicine, or a glass of apple-water ; it was sometimes night, with the gas burning low, sometimes the dusk of evening ; sometimes the cool grey of the morning seemed to be breaking. But of the hours between such points Matilda knew nothing ; she kept no count of days ; a general feeling of long weariness and dull headaches filled up all her consciousness ; she reasoned about nothing.

So that it was quite a new experience, at waking one morning, to feel Mrs Laval's lips pressed to hers for a kiss, and to hear a cheerful voice say—

“ My darling is better ! ”

Matilda looked up.

“ I believe I have been unwell,” she said, in a weak little voice.

“ Indeed you have, darling—very unwell. But you are better now. How do you feel ? ”

“ Better,” Matilda answered in that same faint, *thin* little voice ;—“ weak.”

“ Of course you are weak ! Here is something to make you stronger.”

Mrs Laval brought a tea-cup presently, and fed Matilda with soda biscuit dipped in tea ; very nice it seemed ; and then she went off again into a sweet deep sleep.

When she awoke from this, it was high day, and the light was let into the room as it had not been for a good while. It all looked natural, and yet new ; and Matilda's eyes went from one object to another with a sort of recognising pleasure ; feeling languid too, as if her eyelids could just keep open and that was all. But the light seemed sweet ; and her gaze lingered long on the figure of Mrs Laval, who was standing by the mantelpiece, going over with quiet pleasure every graceful outline and pretty detail, the flow of her soft drapery, the set of the dainty little

French muslin cap which set lightly on her hair, till Mrs Laval turned, and smiled to see her eyes open.

"Ready for breakfast?" she said, gaily.

"I don't believe I could get up, mamma," said the weak little voice.

"Get up! I don't believe you could. But what do you think of having breakfast in bed? Wait; you shall have your face washed first."

She brought a basin, and bathed Matilda's face and hands, first with water and then with cologne. It was pleasant to be tended so, and the fine, soft, sweet damask was pleasant with which the drying was done. Then Mrs Laval rang the bell, and presently came up a tray, which she took from the servant's hands and brought to the bedside herself. Then Matilda was raised up and propped up with pillows, till she could see what was on the plate.

"How nice that cologne is! I haven't had breakfast for a good while before, have I?"

"No, my darling." And Mrs Laval stooped to press her lips fondly. "What do you say to a little bit of roast bird?"

Matilda was very glad of it; and she enjoyed the delicate thin slice of toast, and the fragrant tea out of a sort of egg-shell cup; the china was so thin it was semi-transparent. She made a bird's breakfast, but it was very good, and did her good.

"Mamma," she said, as she drank the last drops from that delicate cup, "it must be a dreadful thing to be poor! When one is sick, I mean."

"You never will be, darling," said Mrs Laval.

"She was slowly but surely mending all that day. The next morning she had another roast bird for breakfast, and could eat more of it.

"Norton wants to see you dreadfully," Mrs Laval said as she was feeding her. "And so does David, I believe. How have you and David got to be such good friends?"

"I don't know, mamma. I like David very much."

"Do you?" said Mrs Laval, laughing; "perhaps that is

the reason. Like makes like, they say. You are one of the few people that like David Bartholomew."

"Am I? Why, mamma? Don't you like him?"

"Certainly; he is my nephew. I ought to like him."

"But that don't make us like people," said Matilda, meditatively.

"What? that little word 'ought'? No, I think it works the other way."

"But I think I like everybody," Matilda went on. "Everybody *some*. I don't like all people one as much as another."

"No," said Mrs Laval. "That would be too indiscriminate. Well, David likes you. *That* is not strange. And he wants to see you."

"Yes, and Norton. Mamma, I think I would like better to be up, before I see the boys."

"I shall not let them come in before that."

So one or two days still passed, in sleeping and resting and waking, to feel stronger every time; and then one afternoon Matilda was taken up and dressed in a warm wrapper, and placed in a delightful easy-chair which Mrs Laval had brought up for her. She felt very weak, but exceedingly comfortable. Then she saw the door of her room slowly pushed inwards, and the bright head of Norton softly advancing beyond it. So soon as he caught sight of Matilda in her easy-chair, he came in with two bounds, knelt down before her, and taking her in his arms kissed her over and over.

"There is one person glad to see you," remarked Mrs Laval.

Matilda's eyes were glittering with tears; she said not a word.

"Glad!" echoed Norton. "Pink, the house has been too stupid for anything without you. It's astonishing what a difference one girl makes."

"One girl!" said Mrs Laval.

"Ah!" said Norton. "I didn't say anything about the other. It wouldn't distress me at all to have Judy shut up in her room a few days."

"But not by illness!" said his mother.

"Not particular how, mamma; do Judy no harm either
She wants taking down somehow."

"Why, Norton," said Matilda, "I thought you were so
busy with your greenhouse, you wouldn't miss me much.
And Judy and you were getting on nicely with the flowers,
I thought."

"Nicely!" repeated Norton. "She doesn't care any more
for the flowers than if they were grown to make doormats
of. Greenhouse! why, it's as much as I can do to prevent
her pulling all the buds off; and when she's got them, as
I said, she don't care the least for them. No; the one thing
Judy Bartholomew cares for is mischief; and the second is
her own way."

"Gently, Norton!" said his mother. "I know somebody
else that likes his own way."

"Yes, ma'am, and can't get it—worse luck!"

"O Norton!" said Matilda.

"Well, I'd just like to have you tell me, then, how I'm to
get Judy Bartholomew out of my greenhouse."

"How did you get her in?" asked his mother.

"I went into partnership with her."

"And I ask, why?"

"Because she had money, mamma; and I wanted the
greenhouse in order; and Pink wouldn't."

"Couldn't," said Matilda. She did not feel like using
many words just then.

"Pink, mamma, is the very worst person in the world about
having her own way."

"And the very best person in the world about being
unwell."

"How, mamma?" said Matilda. "I haven't done any-
thing at all but lie still and be taken care of."

"Mamma, she looks pale; and her voice sounds thin;
aren't you going to give her something to strengthen her
up?"

"She is going to have her supper in a few minutes."

"What are you going to give her?"

"Roast oysters and bread-and-butter."

"That sounds jolly. I'd stay and have some too ; only I have got to see a fellow round the corner. Good-bye, Pink. I'm off. Eat as many oysters as you can."

And off he ran. Matilda was disappointed ; she was very fond of him, and she thought he might have liked better to stay with her this first evening. A little creeping feeling of home-sickness came over her ; not for any place that was once called home, but for the clinging affection of more hands and voices than one.

"He's a boy, dear," said Mrs Laval, noticing her look. "Boys cannot bear to be shut up, even with what they love the best. And you are a girl—just full of womanly tenderness. I see it well enough. You will have something to bear in this world, my child. Boys will be boys, and men will be men ; but Norton loves you dearly, for all that."

"I know he does, mamma," said Matilda.

But when, a few minutes later, Mrs Laval was called downstairs to see somebody, the feeling she had kept back rushed upon her again. She wanted something she had not got. And she began to think of her best Friend. Matilda had not forgotten Him ; yet through these days of illness and weakness, and the constant presence of somebody in her room, she had missed for a long time her Bible readings and all but very short and scattering prayer. She recollects this now ; and longing after the comfort of a nearer thought of God and closer feeling of His presence, she got up out of her chair and tottered across the room, holding by everything in her way, to the place where she kept her Bible. Once back in her easy-chair, she had to rest a bit before she could read ; then she found a place of sweet words that she knew, and rested herself in a more thorough fashion over them.

She was bending down with her volume in her hand to catch the fading light from the window, when another visitor came in. It was David Bartholomew, who having knocked and fancied that he heard the word of permission, walked

in and was at her side before she knew it. Matilda started, and then looked very much pleased.

"You are not strong enough to be studying," David said, kindly.

"Oh, I am not studying."

"What have you got there that interests you so much, then, to be bending over it like that?"

Now Matilda was afraid to say she was reading the Bible, knowing in what abhorrence David held part of her Bible; so she answered with a quick sort of instinct, "It was only a chapter in Isaiah, David."

"Isaiah!" he repeated; "our Isaiah? Let me see, please."

He took the book and looked keenly at the page.

"What interested you so here, Matilda?"

"I was reading that little twelfth chapter. I was thinking of those 'wells of salvation.'"

She was trembling with the fear of saying something or other to displease him, afraid to answer at all; but the simplest answer seemed the best; and she prayed for wisdom and boldness. David was looking hard at the page, and alternately at her.

"It is our Isaiah," he said, turning the leaves back and forward; "it is our Scriptures; but not the Hebrew. I shall learn to read the Hebrew. What were you thinking about the 'wells of salvation,' Matilda?"

Matilda was getting very nervous; but as before, she answered simply the truth.

"I was thinking how sweet the water is."

"You!" said David, with a depth of astonishment which might have made her laugh if she had not been so frightened. "You! what do you know of them, or think you know? These words belong to the time of Messiah ben David."

"Yes," said Matilda.

"What do you think you know about them?"

Matilda thought within herself that here was the end of David's friendship for her. Her heart sank; yet she spoke as before.

"I have drawn water out of them, David ; and I know that the water is sweet."

He stood and looked at her, as if he were full of something to say ; but perhaps he guessed at her reference, or perhaps he saw her too feeble to be attacked with exciting topics. He shut his mouth and said nothing ; and just then the servant entered bearing the tray with Matilda's supper. That made a nice diversion. I think David was glad of it. At any rate he made himself useful ; brought up the little table to Matilda's side, set the teapot out of her way, and spread her napkin on her lap. Then, hearing that Mrs Laval was detained down-stairs, he took the management of things upon himself. He made Matilda's cup of tea ; he spread bread-and-butter ; he opened oysters. Nobody could have done it better ; but it was always acknowledged that David Bartholomew was born a gentleman. Matilda enjoyed it hugely. She was ready for her oysters, as a little convalescent child should be ; and bread-and-butter was good ; but to have David helping her and ministering to her gave to both an exquisite flavour. He was so nice about it, and it was so kind of him.

"That other supper has been sadly put off, hasn't it ?" he said, as he opened Matilda's last oyster.

"What supper ?" said Matilda.

"The supper we had arranged so finely, a long while ago ; the celebration of your good woman's moving in."

"My good woman ! Oh, you mean Mrs Staples. She hasn't moved in yet ?"

"No ; we waited for you to get well."

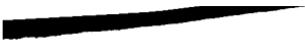
"Waited all this while !" said Matilda. "David, I wonder when I shall be able to go out ?"

"Not in a good while, Tilly, to any such entertainment as that. I dare say you can go driving in the Park in two or three weeks."

"But she cannot wait all that while," said Matilda ; and then she stopped. If not, then the moving of Mrs Staples, and all the delight of the supper to be prepared for her, and the pleasure of seeing her pleasure, must be for others ; not



"But to have David helping and ministering to her gave to both
an exquisite flavour."



for the little planner and contriver of the whole. For a minute Matilda felt as if she could not give it up, this rare and exquisite joy ; such a chance might not come again in a very long while. She had wanted to see how the stove would work ; she had wanted to hear the kettle sing, and to set the table with the new cups and saucers, and to make the tea that first time, and give the incomers a welcome. *Could* all that be lost ? It seemed very hard. Matilda's eyes filled with tears.

"What is the matter ?" said David, kindly.

Matilda struggled to speak. She knew what she must say ; but at first she could hardly get the words out. She hesitated, and David repeated his question.

"It won't do for them to wait so long," she said, lifting her eyes to his face.

"Who ? your poor people there ? Well, it does seem a pity, looking at the place where they are now."

"It won't do," Matilda repeated. "It is best for them to go right in, David. But I can't manage it. I can't do anything."

"Will you trust me ?"

"Oh, yes ! if you'll do it. But won't it be a great trouble to you, David ?"

"On the contrary, I shall like it capitally. You tell me exactly what you want done, and I'll attend to it."

"Oh, thank you ! Then you'll have to get the supper things, David."

"Yes ; I know all about that."

"And get Mr Wharncliffe to tell Mrs Staples."

"Yes."

"And—can you buy some calico for me ?"

"Certainly. But I'd put something warmer on them than calico, Tilly."

"What ?"

"I don't know," said David, laughingly ; "I don't know what women wear. But I suppose I can find out. Something *warm*, Tilly ; the air is snapping and biting out-of-doors, I can tell you."

"Oh, well; do see about it as soon as you can, David, and let them move in by Saturday, can't you?"

David promised. And when he was gone, and Matilda was alone in bed again at night, she fought out her whole fight with disappointment. Rather a hard fight it was. Matilda did not see why, when she was about a very good thing, so much of the pleasure of it should have been taken away from her. Why could not her illness have been delayed for one week? and now the very flower and charm of her scheme must fall into the hands of others. She dwelt upon the details, from which she had looked for so much pleasure, and poured out hearty tears over them. She was as much in the dark nearly as Job had been; as much at a loss to know why all this should have befallen her. All the comfort she could get at was in imagining the scenes she could not now see, and fancying all over and over to herself how Sarah and her mother would look and feel.

After that day Matilda's improvement was steady. Soon she had Norton and Judy and even David running in and out at all hours, to see her or to tell her something.

"Great news," said Norton, bursting in as usual one evening. "What do you think, Pink? David and Judy have been to be catechised."

"Catechised!" Matilda repeated. "Do they learn the Catechism?"

"Not yours, I promise you," said Norton; "no, not exactly. But they have been to a Jewish catechising, to be examined in the Jews' Scriptures, you know, and all that. They ought to have been catechised, it seems, when they were younger; but David and Judy have been travelling about, and there has been no chance. Now they've got it. And oh! how Davie has been studying his Bible!"

"His Bible is just like ours, isn't it?—all but the New Testament?"

"He thinks that's a pretty large 'all but'!"

"But the rest is just the same as ours?"

"I suppose so; yes, I believe so. And they have had a

great time, and Davy has come off with a blue ribband or something, and been greatly distinguished."

"Well?" said Matilda, eagerly.

"Well, they all went to it, grandma and Aunt Judy, and they don't know whether they are most pleased or most vexed."

"Vexed!" repeated Matilda.

"Yes. You see their Jew friends and relations are getting great hold of Davy; and now I suppose he will be more of a Jew than ever."

"How will that make him different?" said Matilda, puzzled.

"Different!" said Norton. "Why, you don't think Jews are like all the rest of the world, do you?"

"I don't know," Matilda answered. "I think—if I was a Jew—I would like it."

To which Norton answered at first with a questioning frown; then cleared his brow and laughed.

"You'd like anything that made you different from the rest of the world," he said. "But you're a Pink! and that makes it of course."

"You used to say I was a brick," said Matilda.

"So you are. I'll fight any boy that says you aren't."

But that made Matilda laugh so much that Mrs Laval, coming in, was afraid she would fatigue herself; and she sent Norton away. Matilda, after this, was very curious and a little anxious to see David, and find out what change his being "more of a Jew than ever" would have made in him. When he came, she could not find any change. It was Saturday evening, after tea; so rather late. He came to bring her the news she wanted.

"Well, it's done, Matilda," he said, as he entered.

"And all right, David?"

"Right as can be. Don't you get excited, and I will tell you all about it."

"You are very kind, David," said Matilda, trying to be quiet; but there were two pink spots on her pale cheeks.

"The carpet was down, and made the place look like

another thing. Then Mrs Leary had brightened up the bureau and the chairs and table, and blacked the stove and made a fire. It seemed quite like a home waiting for somebody. Mrs Leary folded her arms, and made me take notice what she had done, and 'expicted I would consider it,' she said."

"Expected you would consider it?" said Matilda.

"Yes. Don't you know what that means? Expected I would pay her for her trouble."

"Ah!" said Matilda. "Did you?"

"Yes, of course. But I made her make up the bed and fill the kettle before she had done. 'An' sure it was iligant, and fit for society,' she said; whatever that meant."

"Fit for company, I suppose, David. But who made the coffee?"

"Wait a bit: I'm coming to that. I was in a puzzle about it; for I wasn't sure of Mrs Leary, and Norton and I didn't know enough."

"Norton! was Norton there?"

"To be sure; at first. He and I got everything else together. Mrs Leary had washed the china and the tin-ware; and we bought cheese and tea and coffee and herring and buns and gingerbread."

"And bread?" said Matilda, looking intensely interested.

"No; buns. And soap we ordered in too, Tilly: Norton is great on soap. I should never have thought of it. And when we had done all we could think of, we sat down to watch the fire and guard the things till somebody came. And we got talking about something else, and forgot where we were; when all of a sudden the door pushed softly open, and a girl came in"—

"Sarah!" cried Matilda.

"Wait! There came in this girl, and stood there looking. And we looked. 'Is this Mrs Leary's?' she asked. 'No,' said I; 'the rest of the house is Mrs Leary's, I believe; but this room belongs to Mrs Staples.' 'And you're Sarah, aren't you?' Norton cried out. I wish you had seen the girl, Tilly! She came a little way further in, and stopped and looked

round, and had all the work in the world to keep herself from breaking down and crying. Her face flushed all over. She wanted to know if we were sure if there was no mistake ? So I told her about you, and how you were unwell, and how you had commissioned us to get ready all these things ; and Norton showed her where to hang her bonnet and shawl ; for she was in a bewildered state. And then I bethought me, and told her we wanted somebody to make the coffee. I think, Tilly, she was as near the condition of Aladdin, when he got into the magician's cave, as ever a mortal could be in this actual world. But she went to work, and that helped her to feel she was not dreaming, I suppose. She made the coffee—and all the while I could see her fingers trembling ;—and she cooked the herring ; and I stood it, herring, smoke, and all ; it was the best fun I 've seen this winter"—

"Since Christmas," Matilda put in ; but her own eyes were very bright and glittering.

"Christmas was nothing to it."

"I wish I had been there."

"I wish you had. There was nothing else wanting. And I wish you could have seen Sarah's eyes ; I think she was afraid to look around her. She would give a glance at something, the chest of drawers or the bed, and then the tears would spring, and she would have just as much as she could do to mind her cooking, and not break down. I didn't know coffee smelt so good, Tilly."

"Doesn't it ! "

"You know about that, eh ? Well, we were all ready, and Sarah set the table ; but Norton and I had to bring out the buns and gingerbread and the cheese ; for I don't think she would have dared. And then the door opened once more, and in came Mr Wharncliffe, and Sarah's mother, and those two poor little imps of boys."

"I don't know much about them," said Matilda.

"I know they are very ragged, of course—how could they help it ? The mother looked as if she would easily fall to pieces too. But I saw the smell of the coffee brightened her up."

"And then you came away, I suppose?"

"Yes, of course. Mr Wharncliffe just saw that everything was right and looked after the coal and things ; and then we left them to take their supper in peace."

"I'm so glad!" said Matilda, heaving a deep sigh. "And I am very much obliged to you, David."

"For nothing," said David. "I had a good time, I can tell you. I should just like to do the whole thing over again, Why, it didn't cost much."

"Only Mr Wharncliffe says we have to be very careful to know about people first, before we give them things ; there are so many deceivers."

"Yes ; I know that," said David. He stood looking into the light and thinking. Matilda wondered what he was thinking about ; she could not ask him as she would Norton.

"It isn't right!" he broke out.

"What, David?"

"It isn't right that there should be such a difference in people ; we here, and they there."

"Mr Wharncliffe says there must be a difference. Some people are clever and industrious, and others are idle and lazy ; and that makes differences."

"That ought," said David ; "but then the people that are not idle or lazy, but unwell or unfortunate, like these people, they ought not to be left in hunger and cold and rags."

"So I think," said Matilda, eagerly ; and then she stopped, for she was not so free with David as to tell him all her thoughts, at least not unless he asked for them.

"It puzzles me," David went on. "I can't see my way out of the puzzle ; only I am sure there is wrong somewhere."

"And it must be right for each of us to do all he can to help," said Matilda.

"David shook his head. "One goes very little way."

"But that is all we *can* do. And if every one would"—

"Every one will not, Tilly ; there it is."

"No; I know it. But still, David, people have to do so."

"So how?"

"Why, each one by himself, I mean."

"Well," said David, smiling, "that's safe for you. I mean to study the subject."

CHAPTER VII.

MATILDA was slow in getting over her illness. It would not do to think of lessons, or let her do anything that would weary her. Instead of that, she was taken to drive, and supplied with materials and patterns for worsted work, and had books at command. Whatever would please her, in short ; at least, whatever Mrs Laval could think of ; for Matilda made no demands on anybody. She was very happy ; feeling well but weak, just so as to draw out everybody's kindness ; and obliged to be quiet enough to thoroughly enjoy her happiness. She made great progress in the affections of the family during this time ; they found a sweetness and grace and modesty in her that presently seemed like to make her the house darling. "She is not selfish," said Mrs Lloyd. "She is really a very graceful little thing," said Mrs Bartholomew. "She is honest," said David. "She is the gentlest, most dutiful child in the world," said Mrs Laval ; but Mrs Laval did not say much about it. She was growing excessively fond of Matilda. Norton declared she was a brick. Judy said nothing. Then they would begin again. "She is a thoroughly courteous child," said Mrs Lloyd. "I do think she is a good little thing," said Mrs Bartholomew. "She has her own opinions," said Norton, who liked her the better for it. "They are not bad opinions either," remarked David.

"Aren't they !" put in Judy. "Wise and *extremely* courteous she was about the liqueur glasses ; don't you think so ?"

"What about the liqueur glasses ?" Mrs Lloyd demanded ; and though Norton and David both tried to stop the recital, out it would come for the second time. Judy would not be

stopped. Mrs Lloyd seemed rather serious, but by no means as much disgusted as Judy would have liked.

"She had her own opinions, as Norton says," David remarked; "but she behaved perfectly well about the whole affair; perfectly *courteous*, Judy."

"Very ridiculous, though, for such a child," his mother added.

"How should she be courteous?" said Judy, scornfully. "She has had no sort of bringing up."

"I should be glad to see you as courteous and as graceful about it," said Mrs Bartholomew. Whereat Judy tossed her head spitefully and meditated mischief.

They did not know how it was. All was true they had said respecting Matilda's manners; and this was the secret of them—she was most simply trying to live up to her motto. For this Matilda studied her Bible, watched, and prayed. It was not herself she was thinking of or trying to please; her obedience and her pleasantness and her smallest actions were full of the very spirit of reverence and good-will; no wonder it was all done gracefully. The days and weeks of illness and feebleness had been a good time for the little girl, and the kindness she received made her heart very tender. She sought ways to please; above all, ways to please God. It was in doing "all in the name of the Lord Jesus" that her manners became so lovely and her presence so welcome to almost all the family; and her happy little face was an attraction for even old Mrs Lloyd, who did not confess to finding many things in the whole world attractive now. But Judy vowed in secret she would disturb this opinion of Matilda, if she could manage it.

So she chose her time. Mrs Lloyd, and indeed all the elders of the family, were extremely particular and punctilious about table manners; exacting the utmost care and elegance in everything that was done. One Sunday there was company at dinner; only one or two gentlemen who were familiar friends, however, so that the young people were not debarred their weekly pleasure and privilege of dining with their grandmother. Judy managed to place

herself next to Matilda, and held her position, though Norton as openly as he dared reminded her she had no right to be there. It was impossible to make a disturbance, and he was obliged to give up the point. Matilda wondered at what she supposed an uncommon mark of favour in Judy; and resolved to be as nice a neighbour as she could. There was not much chance, for of course talking, except a low word now and then, was out of the question. It happened that one of the servants was for some reason out of the way, and there was not the usual abundant service of the table. Just when everybody was helped, Judy somewhat officiously handed somebody's plate to Matilda to be passed for some oysters. The plate came back to her full; it had meat and gravy and oysters and maccaroni on it, and was heavy as well as full. Carefully giving it, as she thought, into Judy's hand, Matilda was dismayed to find it seemingly slip from her own; and down it went, taking impartially Judy's dress and her own in its way. Turkey, gravy, and oysters lodged on Judy's blue silk; while the maccaroni, rich with butter and cheese, made an impression never to be effaced on Matilda's crimson. The little girl absolutely grew pale as she looked down at the disastrous state of things, and then up at Judy. Judy's eyes were snapping.

"Did I do that?" said Matilda, in a bewildered consciousness that she had *not* done it.

"Oh, I guess not," replied Judy, in a tone which civilly said, "Of course you did!" Matilda dared not look at anybody else.

"You had better go up and change your dress, Matilda," said Mrs Laval, gravely. And Matilda went, greatly disconcerted. She was a very dainty child herself; rudeness and awkwardness were almost as abhorrent to her as they were even to Mrs Lloyd; and now she felt that she had disgraced herself, mortified Mrs Laval, and displeased the old lady, besides drawing down the censure and slighting remarks of Mrs Bartholomew. But *had* she done the thing? She was supposed to have done it, that was clear, from the tone of Mrs Lloyd's voice and from Mrs Laval's command,

as well as from Judy's words ; that young lady herself had kept her place in the dining-room, for all that appeared. And Matilda's beautiful crimson dress was spoiled. No doubt about it ; when she had got it off and looked at it, she saw that the butter and cheese had done their work too thoroughly to leave any hope that it might be undone. No acid or French chalk would be of any avail there. Poor Matilda ! she was very much dismayed. She had a particular fancy for the colour of that dress ; it was a beautiful shade, and Mrs Laval liked it ; and Matilda wondered if she was displeased, and wondered with still increasing persuasion that the fault had not lain with her. But who could prove that ? And as it was, the charge of gross carelessness and inelegance lay at her door ; a charge above others that she was unwilling to bear.

She would not venture down to the dining-room again, not knowing whether she would be welcome ; she sat in the dark, thinking, and crying a little. But when there came a knock at her door, she got rid of all traces of tears. There was Norton, who had brought her some Chantilly cake, which she was very fond of ; and close behind him stood David, smiling, and bearing on a plate a great slice of ice-cream. Matilda's hands were both filled.

"Oh, thank you !" she said from the bottom of her heart. "Oh, how kind you are ?" Then as she glanced again at David's benign face, she half exclaimed, "Did I do that ?"

"No," said David, the smile vanishing.

"She didn't ?" cried Norton. "Who did ?"

"Judy."

"Judy !" echoed Norton.

"I thought I didn't do it," said Matilda, forgetting her ice-cream ; "but I was so bewildered, and Judy seemed to think it was I"—

"I saw the whole thing," said David. "It was not you. You were not to blame at all. Your fingers had unclosed from the plate before hers did."

"Did she do it on purpose ?" said Norton, wrathfully,

"and let Pink bear the blame? She shan't bear it two minutes longer."

He was rushing away, but Matilda made one spring and planted herself right in his way.

"What are you going to do?"

"Set this thing to rights."

"How?"

"How? Why, by telling the truth."

"Stop, Norton; there is company."

"All the more reason. Should you be disgraced before company?"

"Hush, Norton, stop," said Matilda, eagerly, and getting both her plates in one hand that she might lay hold of him with the other. "You mustn't, Norton. Don't stir, or you'll make me throw down my ice-cream, and then I *shall* be disgraced."

To prevent the possibility of such a catastrophe, David took the plates from her, and Matilda grasped Norton with both her little hands.

"I'm going!" he said.

"No, you aren't."

"I am, I tell you, Pink. I'll not stand by and allow it. I'll expose Judy and clear you, before everybody, this minute."

"Stop, Norton. You can't do it. Listen to me. You mustn't."

"Now is the very time."

"You mustn't do it at all. I'll tell mamma. I may do that; but you must not say one word about Judy to anybody. I shall get mamma to keep quiet too. You must, Norton."

"She's right, old fellow, that this isn't the time," said David. "Grandmamma would stop your argument very short."

"And you must not say a word, Norton. For my sake! You couldn't prove anything, Norton, and it would only make mischief and do harm. Let it alone, and then it is nothing."

"Nothing!" cried Norton, in great dudgeon.

"Nothing but a little inconvenience to me, and that will be all over by to-morrow. Promise me, Norton; and then I can eat my ice-cream in peace."

"You must promise quickly, then," said David, "for it is beginning to melt."

Norton scolded and grumbled yet; however Matilda saw that she might take her cake and cream; and she ate it looking at him, and enjoying it very much.

"What's the use of being right, then," said Norton, "if nobody is to know it? And you are provoking, Pink! you look just as if nothing was the matter."

"Nothing is the matter, thank you," said the little girl.

"You don't look angry."

"I don't think I am angry."

"You ought to be."

"I think I'm too happy to be angry," said Matilda, finishing her ice. And she looked so cool that Norton could not keep hot. He and David took her empty plates away for her; and so ended that day's trouble. Nevertheless, fruits of it appeared afterwards.

A little while after this Sunday, Norton sickened with the same fever Matilda had had. There followed a long, very quiet time, during which she was much left to herself. Mrs Laval was in the sick-room; for if she was not a skilled nurse, she was a most affectionate mother; and in the cases of both her children, she either did herself or watched over everything that was done. Matilda was not allowed to be with Norton to help, which she would have liked; it was thought that her strength was not sufficiently recovered. So the little girl lived in her room; crept down and up for her meals; was as quiet as a mouse; and endured not a little mischief from Judy's hands. Judy revelled. She was as full of life as of mischief, and she made Matilda her butt. The children generally dining together alone, she had a fair field; for David could not interpose to prevent Judy's sly provocations. They were too sly, and too quick and shifting, and too various and unlooked for.

Sometimes she patronised Matilda as a little country girl ; sometimes she admonished her, very unnecessarily, in the same character ; sometimes Judy took a tone more offensive still, and accused her of artful practices to gain Mrs Laval's favour. David and others were present; but they did not always see what was going on ; or if they attempted to put Judy in order, the attempt was too apt to provoke more trouble than it stopped. Matilda bore a good deal of trial those weeks ; for she was naturally a spirited child, ready to resent injuries ; and besides that, she was a clever child, quite able to return Judy's sharp speeches. She said very little to them, however, except what was good-humoured. Her cheek flushed now and then ; sometimes her little head took its old set on her shoulders, extremely expressive, and equally graceful and unconscious ; the boys would laugh, and Judy toss her own head in a different fashion. These things gave Matilda a good deal of work in her own room. She used to hunt out passages that spoke of forgiveness and kindness and the management of the tongue and the bridling of anger ; and then she used to pray over them, and not once or twice. So Judy never could prevail much with her. However, Matilda wished for many reasons that Norton would get strong and well again, and Mrs Laval be in her old place. As he grew better, she began to be very much in his room ; taking care of him, reading or talking to him, and having very nice times planning garden for Briery Bank when they should go home. That would not be early this year, Norton said he was afraid, because of his school ; but at any rate they would run up at the Easter holidays and set things in train.

One day Matilda was coming up-stairs, after an uncomfortable lunch with Judy alone. She came slowly, for she was weak yet, thinking that Judy was a very difficult person to get along with. David had not appeared at the meal. Just as Matilda reached the head of the stairs at her own door, he came out of his room.

"Tilly," said he, in a choked kind of voice, "come here ! I want you."

A very odd way for David to speak, she thought ; and looking at him, she perceived that he had not his usual calmness and gravity in face any more than in voice. He was flushed and agitated and troubled, it seemed to her. Matilda obeyed his call instantly, and he led the way into his room and shut the door. Then she waited for him to speak and tell what he wanted of her ; but that seemed to be somehow difficult. David hesitated, struggling with himself, she could see ; yet no words came. Matilda was too much in awe of him to speak first. David had been very kind to her lately ; but he was older, older even than Norton, and much graver ; and she did not know him so well. She waited.

As for David, he could hardly speak, or he had great difficulty in the choice of words. He fidgeted a little, taking one or two turns across the room, flushed and paled again, then faced Matilda and spoke with desperate resolution.

"Tilly, what do you know about—that person—I mean the One you think so much of, and call your Messiah ?"

Matilda was extremely astonished.

"Do you mean—Jesus," she asked, doubtfully, and not a little afraid.

"Yes—yes. What do you know about Him ?"

Matilda hesitated.

"I know He loves me," she said, softly.

"*Loves* you ! How do you know that ? how can you know that ?"

"Because I love Him, David ; and I know He loves me. He has said so."

"Said so ! I beg your pardon. How has He said so ?"

"In a great many places, and in a great many ways, David. He died for me."

"Died !" repeated David again ; then, controlling his excitement, which was very great, he again asked Matilda's pardon. "What do you mean by saying He died for you ? for *you*, or anybody ? He was put to death by the Romans, because He set Himself up for a king."

"He didn't," said Matilda, eagerly ; "not in the way the

people said. He told Pilate Himself that His kingdom was not of this world ; and He told the Jews to pay tribute to Cæsar. They accused Him for envy."

"Anyhow, He was put to death like any other criminal. Why should you say He died *for you*? Have you any reason ?"

"Have you got a Bible here, David ?"

"Not your Bible. I have the Scriptures of Moses and the prophets."

"Those are what Jesus said told about Him. But just let me run and get my Bible, David ; I want to show you something. I'll be back in one minute."

He made no objection ; and Matilda rushed out to her own room, threw off her cloak and hat, dropped down on her knees for one instant to pray that the Lord would teach her what to say to David ; then seized her Bible and ran back to him. She was almost as excited now, outwardly, as he seemed ; her little fingers trembled as she turned the leaves over.

"See here, David," she said. "That night, the night of the passover, you know, the night before He died, He was at supper with the twelve disciples."

"What twelve disciples ?"

"Those who were always with Him ; they were the apostles afterwards. Look here ! He broke bread and told them to eat it, and said it was His body broken for them ; and then a cup of wine—and this is what He said about that. See !"

"Read it," said David.

"This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.' 'Testament' is the same word as 'covenant,' Mr Wharncliffe says."

"Covenant !" cried David.

"Yea. In this other place He says, 'This cup is the New Testament,' or covenant, 'in my blood, which is shed for you.' That is the New Covenant that Jeremiah promised."

"Jeremiah !" cried David, again ; "what do you know of Jeremiah ? Is *that* in your Bible ?"

"Certainly it is. Isaiah and Jeremiah, and all of them."

"But what do you mean about that New Covenant? You don't know what you are talking of, Tilly."

"Oh yes, I do, David. Look here; here is the place in Jeremiah; we had all about this in our lesson last Sunday. Look here, David. 'Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith the Lord.'

"'But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.'

Matilda stopped and looked up at David.

"I know all that very well," he replied; "that will be in the days of Messiah."

"Jesus said it was then. He said, 'This cup is the New Covenant *in my blood*.'

"How could that be? what meaning is there in that?"

"Why, David, don't you see? His blood did it."

"Did what?"

"Why, bought forgiveness for us, so that God could give us the New Covenant. It is a covenant to forgive us and make us holy for Jesus' sake. Mr Wharncliffe was explaining it only last Sunday."

"I don't want to hear what Mr Wharncliffe said. Tell me only what you know."

"Well, David, I know it's all true."

"Tilly, how can you?"

"Why, David, I know Jesus has taken away my sins; and I think He is writing His laws on my heart."

"But, Tilly," David exclaimed, with a sort of anxious impatience, "you don't know what you are talking about. You mean that this—Jesus—was our Messiah."

"Yes," said Matilda. "He said He was."

"*He* said He was?" exclaimed David.

"Yes; to be sure He did."

"But you don't know. The Scriptures of the prophets declare that Messiah will be a great king."

"Yes," Matilda answered, slowly, looking at him; "Jesus is a great King."

"No!" said David, quickly. "He was crucified."

"But He rose again, and went back to heaven."

"They stole His body away," said David, "and made believe He was risen."

"Oh, no; that was what the priests told the soldiers to say; but we *know* He rose again, David, for they saw Him—the apostles and Mary Magdalene, and all of them—over and over again."

"But the Scriptures say He shall—I mean Messiah—He shall conquer the enemies of Israel and deliver us."

"I think that means the *true* Israel," said Matilda.

"The true Israel!" said David. "Who are the true Israel? I am one of them. Abraham's children."

The boy spoke proudly, defiantly, as if he felt the noble blood of kings and prophets in his veins, and the inheritance his own. Matilda found it very difficult to go on. So far she had been able to answer him, having given attention to her Sunday-school teaching, and that teaching having lately run in a course fitted to instruct her on some of the points that David started. But she did not know what to say now. She was silent.

"Look here," said David, in the same tone. He seized his Bible which lay at hand, and turning over the leaves, stopped at the prophecy of Daniel, and read—not after the common English version—

"I was seeing in the visions of the night, and lo, with the clouds of the heavens as a Son of Man was one coming, and unto the Ancient of Days He hath come, and before

Him they have brought Him near. And to Him is given dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, and all peoples, nations, and languages do serve Him; His dominion is a dominion age-during, that passeth not away, and His kingdom that which is not destroyed.’” David read, and paused, and looked up at Matilda.

“Yes,” said Matilda, nodding; “that is just what the angel said about Jesus.”

“What angel?”

“The angel that came to tell that He was coming. See, David, wait—I’ll find it; here it is! ‘He shall be great; and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David; and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end.’” And in her turn Matilda looked up at David.

“But what kingdom has *He*?” David asked, between anxiously and scornfully.

“Why, I remember he said, ‘All power is given unto me, in heaven and in earth.’”

“It don’t show,” said David. “Christians are a small part of the world, and not the strongest part by any means.”

“No, I didn’t say they were. I only said Jesus is the King.”

“And I say again, Tilly, you have nothing but words to show for it. How is He king?”

“Oh! but David, wait; look here—I’ll find the place in a minute or two.”

She sought it eagerly, but it took a little while to find any of the words she wanted. David waited patiently, having evidently much on his mind. At last Matilda’s face lighted up.

“Here, David; this is what I mean. I was afraid to put it in my own words. ‘And when He was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come’—you see they thought as you do;—‘He answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation; neither shall they say, Lo, here! or, Lo, there! for behold the king-

dom of God is within you.' That's it, David ; don't you see ? He is King in people's hearts."

"The Messiah is to reign in another fashion than that," David returned. "The Targum says, 'A King shall arise from Jacob, and Messiah be exalted from Israel ; then He shall kill the great ones of Moab, and He shall rule over all the children of men ;' and 'to Him are all the kingdoms of earth to be subjected.' 'The Lord will destroy His enemies who rise to put His people to shame ; He will thunder upon them with a loud voice from the heavens ; the Lord shall exact vengeance from Magog, and from the army of the thundering nations who come with him from the ends of the earth, and He will give strength to His King, and magnify the kingdom of His Messiah.'

"That isn't out of the Bible, is it ?" said Matilda, bewildered.

"No ; it's the Targums."

"I don't know what the Targum is."

"It is a book, or books rather, of the words of our wise Rabbis, explaining the Scripture."

"I don't know anything but the Bible," said Matilda, meekly ; "and I don't know but a little of that."

"Well, you see, Tilly, that *our* Messiah is to be king in a grand fashion, and rule over all kingdoms ; and make His people rule with Him."

"Oh, *that's* like the New Testament !" Matilda cried.

"What part of it ?"

"I don't know exactly where it is ; I'll look ; but, David, Jesus is going to reign so by and by, I know."

"You know !" said David.

"Yes ; for He said so."

"Who said so ?"

"Why, Jesus. Here—stop !—no, here it is, one place. Listen, David, just to this. 'And as they heard these things, He added and spake a parable, because He was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.' That's what you thought, David."

"Well, but"—David began.

"Just listen. 'He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.'"

"What's that?" said David.

"Why, don't you understand?"

"No. Not what it has to do with what I was talking about."

"Why, David, the far country is heaven; and Jesus is gone there until the kingdom is ready, or till He is ready to take it."

"You have nothing but words to show for it."

"No, of course; but they are God's words, David; so they are true."

"Take care," said he, and his dark eye fired and glowed; "you mustn't talk so. You know I don't believe that."

"Believe what?"

"That *His* words are God's words."

"But don't you remember," said Matilda, to whom the words seemed to come in her puzzle, to help her out,— "don't you remember in the Psalms"—

"The Psalms of David?"

"Yes, to be sure, the Psalms of David; don't you remember how it says—Oh, I wish I could find it!—something about 'sitting at my right hand' till His enemies shall be,—I forget what."

"I know!" said David, with a curious change of countenance; and in his own book he immediately turned to the place.

"The affirmation of Jehovah to my Lord: Sit at my right hand, till I make Thine enemies Thy footstool."

"That's it!" cried Matilda. "Jesus is there now, and by and by He is coming to take the kingdom."

It did not seem as if David heard her; so deep was his pondering over the passage he had just read. Little Matilda watched him curiously; his brow was dark, with what sort of thoughts she could not guess; his eye sometimes flashed, and at other times grew intense with looking into

what he was studying. But what struck Matilda most was the look of trouble, the expression of grave care upon his lip. He lifted up his head at last, and his eye met her eye, and he was going to speak, when the clang of the dinner-bell pealed through the house. That day, for some reason, the children were to dine with their elders. Mrs Lloyd was particular about attendance at the minute; David and Matilda parted with one consent and without another word, to make themselves ready to go down.

CHAPTER VIII.

BEFORE Matilda had any chance for more talk in private with David, the week came to an end ; and Sunday afternoon found her in Sunday-school as usual. But, not as usual, she had hardly a word or a minute to spare for Sarah, who was telling of her progress in learning to use a sewing-machine, and of her own and her mother's bettered health. Delightful as it was, and as Sarah's face was, all luminous with grateful and glad feeling, Matilda through the whole of it was intent upon Mr Wharncliffe and his motions ; and the instant Sarah had left her, she sprang to his side.

"Are you busy, sir ? can I talk to you ?"

"Talk ! " said Mr Wharncliffe ; "then we want some time for it, do we ?"

"If you please, sir ; a little."

"Then we'll talk as we walk. Now what is it ?"

But Matilda waited until they were out of hearing of all that they knew ; then in the solitude of the wide avenue she began.

"Mr Wharncliffe, I want some advice ; I don't just know how to manage something."

"Very likely. Let us hear."

"I want to know how to speak to somebody who does not know about Jesus, and who wants to know."

"That often calls for wisdom," said Mr Wharncliffe ; "but I should think it would not be difficult in your case. You can tell what you know : what Jesus has done and is doing for you, and what He has promised to do for everybody."

"Yes, sir, but it is not *that*. It is somebody who wants

to know whether Jesus is the Messiah." And Matilda looked up very eagerly in her teacher's face.

"Well, when 'somebody' has found out that Jesus is the Saviour, he will have no doubt that He is the One 'anointed to save.' You know, Messiah and Christ mean simply 'anointed.'"

"Yes, sir, I know. But—this person"—

"What of him?" said Mr Wharncliffe, smiling. "Is he a very difficult person?"

"Rather," said Matilda, slowly; "because—he has never known that Jesus *is* the Messiah."

"My dear child, to know that truly, in the full meaning and scope of the words, is what no one ever does except by the teaching of the Spirit of God."

"That isn't it," said Matilda. "This person does not know whether to believe the New Testament."

"I would not advise you, Matilda, to hold arguments with an infidel, young or old."

"Oh! he is not an infidel, sir. He is a Jew."

"A Jew!" exclaimed Mr Wharncliffe.

"Yes. And now, he wants to know whether Jesus is the Messiah."

"Is he in earnest, or talking for talk's sake?"

"Oh! in earnest, sir; very much in earnest."

There came a sudden veil over the clear blue eyes that looked down at Matilda; then their owner said—

"I must take you home with me."

It was not far, down a cross-street. Mr Wharncliffe left Matilda in the parlour a few moments, and returned with a book in his hand.

"This is the best I can do for you," he said, "unless you could bring your friend to see me."

"Oh! no, sir; he would not. I don't think he has spoken to anybody but me."

"Nobody but you? Has he no one to speak to?"

"No, sir; not about this."

"Well, my child, as I said, this is the best thing I can do for you."

"What is it, sir?"

"A first-rate reference Bible."

"I have got a Bible."

"I know that. But this has references, which you will find will explain a great many things to you. I advise you not to talk much, because you might not always know just what to say. Do this: Let your friend bring any word or promise about the Messiah that he knows of in the Old Testament Scriptures; you find the place in this little Bible, and see what passages of the *New* Testament it refers to. See, here are the words of the Bible on one page, and the references to each verse on the page opposite. You know what these abbreviations mean?"

"Oh! yes, sir. Oh! thank you, sir," said Matilda, whose hands had now received the volume, and whose eyes were eagerly scanning it. "I will take great care of it, sir."

"I hope you will; but not for my sake. I wish you to keep it, Matilda. It will be useful to you very often. And I shall want to hear how you get on."

He took back the book to put her name in it, while Matilda coloured high, and could hardly find words to speak her thanks. Her teacher smiled at her, escorted her to her own door again, and Matilda went in a happy child.

She was eager now for another chance to talk with David, and she fancied he wished for it too; but demands of school on the one hand, and Norton and Mrs Laval on the other, for days made it impossible. For Matilda well understood that the matter was not to be openly spoken of, and the opportunity must be private when it came. She studied her new little Bible meanwhile with great assiduity, hoping to prepare herself for David's questions. However, she soon found she could not do that. She could only get familiar with the arrangements of her book; what David might ask or might say, it was impossible to guess.

Meantime Judy's disagreeable attentions continued.

"Why do you not eat your soup, Matilda?" Mrs Lloyd asked one day. It was Sunday, of course, the day when the young folks dined with the old ones.

"It is very hot, grandmamma."

"Hot ! mine isn't hot. It is not hot at all ; not *too* hot."

"It is hot with pepper, I think."

"Pepper ! There is not pepper enough in it."

Matilda thought that Mrs Lloyd's palate and her own, perhaps, perceived pepper differently. But when the first course was served, and Matilda had taken curry, of which she was very fond, this was again hot ; so sharp, in fact, that she could not eat it.

"What's the matter ?" said Mrs Lloyd. " Pepper there too ?"

"It is very hot, ma'am," said Matilda, while Judy burst out laughing.

"Curry always is hot, child," said the old lady. "Why do you take it if you do not like it ?"

"I like it very much, grandmamma ; only to-day"—

"It is not any hotter than usual to-day. You should know what you want before you take it. You can make your dinner of rice, then."

The rice was as hot as the rest of it, Matilda thought. She could not eat ; and she was hungry, for she had had a good walk and a brisk lesson in Sunday-school ; but the fiery portion on her plate quite baffled her hunger. She was never helped to pudding or pie more than once ; she went hungry to bed.

That did her no harm ; but it happened again and again, so that, if not starved, she was at least disappointed of eating something she liked, or had something she did eat spoiled by its seasoning. Very indulgent as Mrs Lloyd was about things in general, respecting table manners and all the etiquette of graceful behaviour at meal times, she was exceedingly particular. She did not allow the young people to make any ado about what they ate. She gave them liberty enough of choice ; but once the choice was made, it was made ; and mistakes were at the person's own risk. So when Matilda's salad was very spicy with cinnamon, or her ice-cream excessively and unaccountably salt, or her oysters

seemed to have been under a heavy shower of red pepper, there was no resource but to be quiet ; unless she would have made a scene ; as it was, she got credit for being fanciful and very dainty.

Weeks passed before she and David could be alone together ; eager and curious and sympathetic as she was. David did not change ; the gloom of his troublesome thoughts hung over him, she could see, all the while ; though nobody else seemed to notice it. At last, one evening in March, it fell out that all the family were going to the theatre. Even Mrs Lloyd : for some particular attraction was just then drawing crowds to the nightly spectacle ; and Norton and Judy had put in their claim to be allowed to go, and it had been granted. David was invited, but he refused without ceremony. Mrs Laval turned to Matilda ; and Mrs Lloyd asked graciously if she would like to go ? Now Matilda would have liked very much to go, on one side of the question ; yet her answer was a grateful negative.

"What's the reason ?" said the old lady. "It is no use asking for Davie's reasons, for they are sure to be immovable ; but you, Tilly, what's the matter with you ? Were you ever there ?"

"No, ma'am, never."

"It'll amuse you, child ; come ! Judy's going."

It was difficult to answer ; but Matilda remembered words she had heard from Mr Richmond, which showed that he did not think the theatre a place for a Christian to be amused in ; and without in the least understanding his reasons, Matilda did not dare go. She said, and truly, that she would rather stay at home ; and so it fell out that she and David were left for a whole evening alone.

The carriage had driven off ; the two came back into the little reception-room where the family usually had tea and spent the evening ; Matilda having slipped up-stairs and brought down her two Bibles. David turned up the gas and looked at her.

"What have you got there, Tilly ?"

"A book that will help us, I hope."

"I wish it would help me!" said David, as he sat down and buried his face in his hands.

"We've got all the evening to ourselves, if we want it," said Matilda, a little timidly.

"Yes; they will not be home before twelve o'clock."

But David did not seem in a hurry to avail himself of his opportunity. He sat with his head in his hands, and then got up and walked about, looking dark enough. Matilda waited and watched him, wondering and anxious.

"What do you think of Judy?" he said, suddenly, coming to a stand opposite Matilda.

"I think she likes to amuse herself," Matilda answered, very much surprised.

"How do you like her amusing herself at your expense?"

"I don't like it, David."

"Why don't you get angry?"

"I do."

"So do I, sometimes; but it is your affair. Why don't you speak out?"

"She wouldn't care, David; it wouldn't make any difference."

"Judy! No, not with her; but why don't you speak out to grandmamma, or aunt Zara? They would care."

Matilda's cheeks flushed, and her eyes even looked a little watery; she did not answer at once.

"I don't want to do that, David."

"Why not?"

"It wouldn't be returning good for evil, you know."

"Good for evil! no," said David; "but it would be right."

"I don't think it would be right," Matilda said, gently.

"Why wouldn't it? Good for evil! that is not the law, and it is not justice. The law is, 'Life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.'"

"I don't want to do justice," said Matilda, smiling.

"Why not?" He was observing the little girl closely.
"I don't know, David; it would be no pleasure. Besides"—

"Besides what?"

"Jesus says we mustn't."

"Mustn't what? Do justice?"

"Yes. No—not to ourselves sometimes. You asked me what I knew about Him; this is one thing. He says we must not return evil for evil; nor be angry."

"You were angry at Judy, though?"

"Well, for a little while, sometimes. I couldn't always help it; or I could, I suppose, but I didn't."

"How could you?" said David. "I cannot. When I am angry, I am angry; and there is nothing to do but wait till I get over it."

"That's another thing I know about Jesus," said Matilda, gravely. "He takes the anger away." She wished that David would begin upon his former line of inquiry, now that she had her little book to consult; but she could not hurry him. David looked hard at her, and then his gloom seemed to come over him. He sunk his head again; and Matilda waited.

"What can you tell me?" he said, at last.

"I don't know. Perhaps, if you would try it, my book would tell you something."

"What could it tell me?"

"Answer some of your questions, perhaps."

David at last roused to action. He went off upstairs and brought down *his* Bible—half a Bible it looked to Matilda's eyes—and under the bright gas-lights the two sat down to compare notes.

"I don't know but a part of the things that are said about the Messiah," said David, turning over the leaves; "but what I do know, seem to me impossible to be fulfilled in Him you Gentiles think the Messiah. And yet—they said"—

David stopped, in great perplexity.

"What are some of those things?"

" Well, this is one. He is to be of the seed of David ; for so Isaiah prophesied.

" And a rod hath come out from the stock of Jesse, and a branch from his roots is fruitful. Rested on Him hath the Spirit of Jehovah, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and fear of Jehovah."

" Well, David, Jesus was that. See,—here is the whole list of the names of the people." And she put in the boy's hands the first chapter of Matthew.

" The son of David, the son of Abraham ! " cried he ; but then immediately became so absorbed in the chapter, and in that list of names which Matilda had always thought very uninteresting, that she could only watch him, and doubt if he would come back to talk with her any more that evening.

" But," said David at last, handing back her book, " that is only one thing. Listen to this. The promise was to David—' I have raised up thy seed after thee, who is of thy sons, and I have established His kingdom ; he doth build for me a house, and I have established His throne unto the age.' Where is the throne of—of your Messiah, as you call Him ? And see here again, in the Psalms of David—

' I have made a covenant for my chosen,
' I have sworn to David my servant,
' Even to the age do I establish thy seed,
' And have built from generation to generation thy
throne.'

" What is 'to the age' ? " Matilda asked.

" For ever. Where is the throne of your Jesus ? "

" It is in heaven," said Matilda, promptly.

" But Messiah is to reign on earth."

" Now listen, David. This is what the angel said of Jesus, when he came to tell Mary that He should be her son : ' He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest ; and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David ; and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever ; and of His kingdom there shall be no end.' "

"Well," said David. "But when? and where?"

"Here is another place that my book turns to, David; now listen. David himself saith in the book of Psalms, 'The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool.'"

"Yes; I know it says so."

"Well, David, then don't you see He will be up in heaven until the time comes? Here is another passage—it begins about something else, and then goes on: 'Which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under His feet.' And here again—'But this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made His footstool.'"

"When will that be?" said David.

"I don't know. I don't think it tells."

"But Messiah is to be a Conqueror," David went on, passing from one thing to another. "It is written—

'Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O mighty!'

'Thy glory and thy majesty!'

'As to thy majesty—prosper!—ride!'

'Because of truth and meekness—righteousness.'

'And thy right hand sheweth thee fearful things.'

'Thine arrows are sharp,

'Peoples fall under thee—

'In the heart of the enemies of the king.'"

"Where is that?" Matilda asked. And David told her. She eagerly consulted her little book, and then cried out—

"Why, it is the very same thing! Look here, David; or just listen, and I will read—

'And I saw heaven opened.'"—

"Stop. *Who* saw heaven opened? Who said that?"

Matilda paused. "It is in the Revelation," she said.

"Yes ; but what is that ?"

"I don't know exactly ; but I know it is the things that were shown to John, the Apostle, about what is going to be by and by."

"Who was that John ?"

"Why, one of the Apostles, David ; one of the twelve Apostles that were always with Jesus, and went everywhere with Him, and saw all that He did. Then, after He was gone, they preached to the people, and told what they had seen and heard."

"After He was gone where ?"

"Back to heaven."

"Well, read," said David, with a troubled sigh.

"And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse ; and He that sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns ; and He had a name written, that no man knew but He Himself. And He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood ; and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in white linen, white and clean. And out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations ; and He shall rule them with a rod of iron ; and He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS."

"But He was to be a prophet like Moses," said David ; "and He was to be born in Bethlehem, in the land of Judah."

"Well, He was," said Matilda.

"Then how should He be all *that?*" And the boy's frame shook, as if a nervous shudder had taken him.

"Don't you remember the 110th Psalm ?" said Matilda, after a little more study. "'The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool.' Look at it."

David did so, in his own Scriptures, and pondered the words a second time.

"And this is what the Lord Jesus said about those very words, David. 'While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, What think ye of Christ ? whose son is He ? They say unto Him, The son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call Him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make Thine enemies Thy footstool ? If David then call Him Lord, how is He his son ?'"

"What did they say ?" asked David, eagerly.

"Who ?"

"Those Pharisees. What did they answer ?"

"It says, 'No man was able to answer Him a word.'"

Poor David was in the same condition. "Well, go on," he said, between puzzle and despondency.

Matilda consulted her references, to see with what she should go on ; and then read the three first verses of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

"God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds ; who, being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."

"But—but," said David looking up, "Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem of Judah, for so said the prophet Micah."

"Jesus was born in Bethlehem," Matilda replied.

"But, He was called the Nazarene," said David, with a kind of shiver. The boy was terribly excited, though he controlled the outward expression of his excitement as much as possible.

"He lived in Nazareth," said Matilda, eagerly ; "that was His home."

"Then how could He be born in Bethlehem? It's near a hundred miles off, I think."

"But don't you know," said Matilda, "Caesar Augustus ordered everybody to be—what is it you call it?—I forget—to have their names put down in a list of all the families and tribes, so that they might be taxed."

"Taking the census?"

"I don't know; maybe it's that. And so, Joseph and Mary had to go to Bethlehem to have their names put down there, because it was David's city, you know, and they were of the house of David. And while they were there, Jesus was born. But after a while they went back, and lived in Nazareth."

David looked dark and eager; he made no answer.

"And it says in the first chapter of Matthew, David, that the prophet said, 'They shall call His name Emmanuel, which, being interpreted is, God with us.'

"It is true," said David. "So spoke the prophet Isaiah. But how then did he speak also of Messiah's sufferings? How could that be?"

"Where, David? and how?"

The boy turned over gloomily the leaves of the book which he held, and began to read at the fifty-third chapter.

"Who hath given credence to that which we heard? and the arm of Jehovah, on whom hath it been revealed?"

"What chapter is that?" Matilda asked; and he told her. She turned to the place.

"Who hath believed our report?" that is it exactly, David. Don't you see? You do not believe it, and all the Jews do not believe it, when it is told to them."

"What?" said David.

"Why, that Jesus is the Messiah; and all about Him. 'He is despised and rejected of men'—see how it goes on."

"What does this mean, I wonder," said David, as he looked over the chapter—"He is pierced for our transgressions, Bruised for our iniquities, The chastisement of our peace is on Him, And by His bruise there is healing to us?"

"This is what it means, David : 'The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.' That is in Matthew. And here in Romans—'God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.' And in Corinthians—'He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.' Don't you see ?"

"Oh, hush ! stop !" said David ; "you bewilder me. Here Isaiah goes on—

"Each to his own way we have turned,
 'And Jehovah hath caused to meet on Him
 'The punishment of us all.
 'It hath been exacted, and He hath answered.
 'And He openeth not His mouth,
 'As a lamb to the slaughter He is brought'"—

David stopped again, and Matilda searched for words to answer him, and presently read—

"So Christ was once offered to bear the sin of many ; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

"The second time ?" said David.

"Yes ; when He comes to take the kingdom, you know."

David sighed deeply.

"David," said Matilda, hesitatingly, she had been watching for a chance to say it, "don't you know what Zechariah says about Him ?"

"Zechariah ?"

"Yes ; the prophet Zechariah. Mr Wharncliffe says that is a time coming to your people ;—in the twelfth chapter. You can read it best for yourself in your own book. It begins at the ninth verse—what I mean."

"This ?" said David.

"And I have poured on the house of David,
 'And on the inhabitants of Jerusalem,
 'A spirit of grace and supplications,

'And they have looked unto me whom they pierced,
'And they have mourned over it,
'Like a mourning over the only one,
'And they have been in bitterness for it,
'Like a bitterness over the first-born.
'In that day, great is the mourning in Jerusalem,
'As the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of
Megiddon ;
'And mourned hath the land—every family apart ;
'The family of the house of David apart,
'And their women apart ;
'The family of the house of Nathan apart,
'And their women apart ;
'The family of the house of Levi apart,
'And their women apart ;
'The family of Shimei apart,
'And their women apart,
'All the families that are left,
'Every family apart, and their women apart ! "

The boy's face grew darker and darker as he read, and he remained gloomily looking at the page after he had finished.
"It looks like it," he said, at last.

"Looks like what, David ?" Matilda asked, timidly. His face was very cloudy as he lifted it to speak to her, and he spoke with difficulty.

"They are saying, Matilda,—my uncle, I mean, and the wise ones,—they are saying, I heard them saying it a few weeks ago, softly to each other, that the time must be up ; and that if Messiah does not come very soon"—

"What then ?" Matilda asked, for he had stopped suddenly.

"Then, they say, it must be, or may be, that He *has* come !"

She was astonished at the changes in David's face. It flushed and paled, his lips quivered, his brows were knit ; the dark eyes were like clouds and fire at once. Evidently there was a struggle going on which she had no means of gauging.

"What if He has?" she asked, gently. "Would you care so very much?"

"Care!" exclaimed David, and his expression startled her. "Care!—whether our Messiah has come, and we have not known Him, and have injured Him and rejected Him?"

"But that is just what Isaiah said would be."

"Don't!" said David. "I can't bear it! If that is true, there will be such a cry as Zechariah said, and I will begin it. But I don't believe it, Matilda; it cannot be. I will not believe it."

He threw down his book and walked up and down the room with folded arms and a brow black as night. Hardly a boy's action; but neither was it a boy's feeling which possessed him just then. Matilda looked on, very sorry, very much awed, and entirely at a loss to know what to say. She consulted her Bible again, and found a passage which she wished to show him; but she had to wait for the chance. David walked up and down, up and down, restlessly.

"I can't make it out!" he exclaimed. "It confuses me. If *that* were true, then all our whole nation have been wrong all these years; and we have lost everything—the promise made to Abraham and all."

"But Jesus will fulfil all the promises," said Matilda, gently.

"To those who disowned Him?" David asked, almost fiercely.

"I think He will," said Matilda. "Why, the first Christians were some of those very Jews."

"How can that be?" said David, standing still and looking at her.

Matilda found the second chapter of Acts, and handed it to him. She thought her own words were best to be few. David looked unwillingly at her book; but, however, took it, sat down, and under the light of the gas burner began to read. Matilda could not help furtively watching him, and it almost frightened her; the changes in the boy's face were

so quick and strong. He read like one reading for his life ; he never knew that Matilda was watching him ; his eyes seemed to pierce the book like steel lances ; and through his parted lips the breath came and went hurriedly. Matilda thought he never would get through the chapter, he was so long over it.

" May I keep this a day or two ? " he said, at last.

Matilda joyfully assented.

" I wish I had some one to talk with about this," he said ; " somebody who could answer me, or who could *not* answer me."

" Your uncles ? " Matilda suggested.

" They would only silence me."

" I wish you could see Mr Richmond."

" Who's he ? "

" He's a friend of mine, and, oh ! the pleasantest and the nicest man ! and he can answer anybody."

" Can he ? " said David, half smiling. " Where does he live ? "

" Up in Shadywalk. I *wish* you could see him. He could tell you just everything, and I cannot."

" You have told me so much, though, that I must know more. What is this Mr Richmond ? "

" He is a minister, David. Oh ! you would like him."

" He would be the first then," said David.

" He is not the least like Dr Blandford—not the *least*."

" Maybe there's some chance then. Matilda, don't tell anybody of all this ; it is between you and me."

" No, David ; of course I shall not. Are you going to bed ? "

" I am going up."

" They won't be home yet for an hour."

" I don't want to see them when they do come."

" Nor have any supper ? "

" I don't care about supper. Good-night."

He went off, and Matilda's heart was very tender for him. What could she do ? He had carried away with him the

little reference Bible ; she could not look out passages for his help any more. Had they been for his help ? The whole talk looked very confused to Matilda as she remembered it ; and David evidently was in much more trouble than he showed. Matilda prayed for better help than she could give, prayed with all her heart ; then found herself very sleepy, and went to bed.

CHAPTER IX.

IT was a few nights after this that the children were amusing themselves in the same little reception-room. Esther Francis was with them, and the elders were with company in the drawing-room. The young ones had it all their own way ; they had taken tea together in what Norton declared to be a very jolly style ; and now in a circle of sociable dimensions,—that is, very much drawn together,—they were talking over a great variety of things. All except David ; he hardly said anything ; he looked dark and jaded ; nevertheless he listened to what was going on.

"I know one thing," said Norton ; "I must be off to the country pretty soon."

"School term of no consequence ?" said David.

"None at all. You see, bulbs keep no account with schoolmasters ; the only account they keep is with the sun ; and how they do that when the sun don't show himself, surpasses me. It's one of the queer things."

"Find a good many of them, Norton ?" asked Esther, smiling.

"Queer things ? Lots ! Don't you ?"

"Well, I don't know. There are some queer people."

"Some. Just a few, I should think there were," said Norton. "Enough to keep one from going to sleep with sameness."

"Well, but I don't find so many," said Esther. "Am I queer ?"

"Not a bit of it."

"You speak as if it was an honour to be queer," said the young lady, bridling her pretty head.

"An honour ! I don't know about that," said Norton. "It certainly may be said to be a—distinction."

"Who is queer?" said Esther. "You?"

"Not he," said David.

"You know best," said Norton, shaking his curly head.

"He thinks he has so much else to distinguish him," said Judy; "he can do without that."

"Not *your* case," said Norton, politely nodding at her.

"Don't depend upon your word," said Judy, scornfully.

"Not at all," rejoined Norton; "it is open to the most hasty observer."

"Is Matilda queer?" Esther asked, laughing.

"She'd never let the world go to sleep," said Norton, contentedly; "at least, not till all could sleep comfortably."

They laughed at that, and Matilda as much as anybody.

"But what did you mean, Norton," she said, "about the bulbs and the country?"

"Just what I said. It's the most mysterious thing the way the roots down in the earth know when it is time for them to send up their green shoots. They will do it too, and when things aren't ready for them by any means above ground. Spring may be ever so late, and the earth hard packed with frost, and snow and clouds making you believe it is winter yet; and there will come the little green shoots, pushing up their heads, and telling you *they* know what time of year it is better than you do. How they get up through the frozen earth is more than I know. I tell you *they* are queer."

"Then you mean something good by being queer, Norton," Matilda said.

"Don't know about that; they are ahead of the year, you see, and that don't always do. They have a hard time of it sometimes."

"But are you going up to see them?"

"Yes; pretty soon. The coverings must be taken off the beds, you see; and I must look after it."

"I am so glad spring is come again!" said Esther.

"What for you?" said Norton. "You don't make garden."

"No; but I can eat strawberries."

"Strawberries! Oh, ho! that's it. That's what you want spring for."

"I am sure strawberries are good, Norton," said Matilda. "Do you remember how you and I ate strawberries on the bank last summer?—and made lists?"

Norton gave her a very intelligent glance of acknowledgment.

"Lists of what?" Judy asked.

"Things we were going to have for tea," Norton answered, coolly.

"Oh, no! Norton; they were not," said Matilda.

"Well, it was something in the housekeeping department."

"Housekeeping!" cried Esther.

"What is strange in that?" inquired Norton, coolly.

"Why, you are rather young, you and Matilda, to set up housekeeping."

"Rather," said Norton; "so it was somebody else, you see."

"Oh! it was for somebody else?" said Esther.

"When are you going, Norton?" Matilda asked, eagerly.

"Pretty soon; in a week or two more; just as soon as we have a few more spring days."

"Oh! how nice the spring days are!" said Matilda. "I am so glad they are come again!"

"For the strawberries?" Esther asked, archly.

"Oh, no! not the strawberries; but it is so pleasant to see the green grass again, and the dandelions."

"Dandelions!" exclaimed Judy.

"Yes, indeed; and the locust blossoms, and the cows going to pasture, and yellow butterflies skimming about, and the nice warm days; and pinks and roses."

"And croquet," said Norton.

"Oh! croquet is delicious!" said Esther.

"I am glad, because I like the driving," said Norton. "It is better than all the Central Parks in the world. And the fishing is jolly, too, when you have good sport. It's jolly altogether, at Shadywalk."

"But, Norton, the house is shut up," said Matilda.

"What about it?"

"What will you do? you can't manage all alone."

"Go to Kepple's—that's easy."

"How long will you stay?"

"Two or three days. I guess I'll take the Easter holidays—that's just the thing."

What was said next for a few minutes Matilda did not hear; she was musing so intently; then she broke out—

"O Norton! I wonder if I might go with you?"

"You? That *would* be jolly," said Norton.

"I could go to Mr Richmond's, you know; and then we could see all about our tulip and hyacinth beds; and it would be *so* pleasant!"

"Well, suppose you do. I'm agreed."

"Do you think mamma would like it?"

"We'll coax her into thinking it's a splendid plan," said Norton; "and that's what it is."

Matilda's eye went furtively over to David; he met it, but she could not tell what he thought. Hope and pleasure made her cheeks flush high. Judy tossed her head.

"Why don't you ask me?" she said.

"I haven't asked anybody yet," said Norton.

"I should like to go too. Will you take me?"

"Would you like to say what you would do if you got there?"

"I don't know!" laughed Judy.

"I do. All the mischief you could manage. No, thank you. I should have to sit next you at the hotel table."

"What harm would that do?" said Esther, laughing.

"I should find mustard in my coffee and pepper in my pudding sauce," said Norton. "No harm, only rather spoils the coffee and rather hurts the pudding sauce."

Matilda looked suddenly at Norton, and so did Judy; but they saw he was only speaking at random, and did not know how close he was coming to the truth. Then the two pairs of eyes met involuntarily. Judy laughed carelessly.

"I'll go, if you go," she said to Norton. "At least, if Matilda goes, I'll go."

This time Matilda's and David's eyes met. He smiled, and she took comfort.

As soon as a good opportunity could be found, the plan was broached to Mrs Laval, and urged by both her children. She demurred a little ; but finally consented, on the strength of Norton's plea that it would do Matilda good. From this time the days were full of delightful hope and preparation. Only David lay on Matilda's thoughts with a weight of care and longing. Once she caught an opportunity, when they were alone, to seize his hand and whisper, "O David ! can't you come too, and see Mr Richmond ?" And he had answered very gravely that he did not know ; he would see.

Easter fell this year rather late in April ; late, that is, for Easter. Schools were dismissed on Thursday ; and Thursday afternoon Matilda and Norton were to take the cars for Shadywalk. She could not say another word to David, or about him ; she made her happy preparations with a secret unsatisfied longing running through them all. Judy had made an earnest endeavour to be one of the party ; and Matilda did not know how, but the endeavour had failed. And now the early dinner was eaten, her little travelling-bag was packed, the carriage was at the door, good-byes were said, and Matilda got into the carriage. At that exact minute David came out of the house with *his* travelling-bag in hand, and in a minute more the house door was shut, so was the carriage door, and they were all three rolling off towards the station.

"O David, I'm so glad !" burst from Matilda. "How did you manage it ?"

"Like himself," said Norton ; "kept his own counsel and had his own way. It's a good thing to be Davy Bartholomew."

"I don't know about that," said David.

"Don't you ? Never heard a doubt on that subject expressed before. But, anyhow, it's jolly to have you

along, Davy. Why, you've never seen Shadywalk, nor Briery Bank."

Matilda smiled a very bright and expressive smile at David, which said, "Nor Mr Richmond either." The smile was so genial and glad and winsome, that it cheated David out of some part of his gloom ; or perhaps he thought it unworthy to show it before his kind little companion. He brightened up, and talked about the things that were interesting her and Norton ; and at the station behaved like the manly boy he was ; getting tickets and taking care of Matilda, and finding a good place in the cars where they could all sit together. The moment was so full of joy to Matilda that it made her sober. Going to see her old haunts and old friends was a great deal of itself ; going on an expedition with Norton was delightsome ; but that David should really be going too, to see Mr Richmond, almost took away her breath with gladness. The slow movement of the cars, beginning to roll away from the station, was accompanied by a perfect leap and bound of her little heart making an aerial flight on the instant to the end of the journey.

The end of the journey, however, had to be reached by the usual patient, or impatient, stages—patient in this case to Matilda. She was so happy, that she enjoyed every foot of the way. The spring sunlight on the river it was quite delightful to see again ; the different stations on the road were passed with curious recollections of the last time, and comparisons of herself now and herself then. The evening fell by the time they reached Poughkeepsie, and shadowy visions of Maria seemed to occupy all the place while the train stopped there. Poor Maria ! Matilda was glad to have the cars move on, since she could get no nearer than visions. Then it grew dark ; and she sat musing and dreaming pleasant dreams, till the station of Shadywalk was whistled for.

The old omnibus was in waiting, as usual ; and it happened that no other passenger occupied it to-night except their three selves and one cosy old lady, who "didn't count," Norton said. It was quite dark ; they could not see the landscape.

"Briery Bank ought to be worth a good deal," said David, "when it takes so long to reach it."

"So it is," said Norton.

"Oh! it's lovely, David!" cried Matilda. "Not so much now, though, when the leaves are not out."

"Are you going to the minister's to-night?"

"To be sure I am. Mr Richmond would be very much surprised if I went anywhere else."

"Well, when I get the beds uncovered, Pink, I'll come for you, and we can see what we will do."

"You'll come with me to-night, Norton?"

"I'll let Davy see you there, while I make arrangements."

"What arrangements? Oh! come now, Norton. Mr Richmond will like to see you."

"He can wait till to-morrow, I dare say," replied Norton. "Anyhow, I can. You will be enough for to-night."

"What sort of a man is the one you are talking of?" David asked Norton.

"He's a brick!" said Norton, and began to whistle, then interrupted himself. "But he is Pink's friend, you understand, much more than mine."

"Some old tutor of yours?" said David, smiling.

"Old! not exactly. Nor a tutor neither, that ever I heard, though he does teach folks, or tries to. No; you're out, Davy. I tell you, he's a brick!"

"Oh! we're going over the bridge now, Norton!" Matilda exclaimed. "We're almost there. Look! I can see lights, can't I?"

There was no question about it. In a few minutes more Norton got out at the Shadywalk hotel; and the omnibus lumbered on through Butternut Street to the parsonage gate, and drew up at last before the old brown door. But it was too dark to see colours. Indeed, David had some difficulty in finding the knocker; and meanwhile the omnibus lumbered off, while they were not attending. David knocked and knocked again. Matilda was trembling with delight.

"There's nobody at home," said David. "It is all dark."

But at that instant a step was heard in the hall, and the door was opened. A little light that came from within a door somewhere beyond, revealed nothing except the outline of a figure.

"Who is it?" said a voice. "My lamp's gone out; I guess it wants a new wick. Who's here?"

"Don't you know me, Miss Redwood?" said Matilda's voice, quivering with pleasure.

"Don't know anybody without I see 'em. I ain't called to guess who you be, as I know. Come in, if you want to, and tell your errand. Is it me or the minister you're after?"

"Miss Redwood, it's Matilda Laval; and I'm so glad to see you," said Matilda, waiving further recognition, and throwing her arms round the housekeeper's neck; "oh, I'm so glad to see you! Is Mr Richmond at home?"

"Tilly Englefield!" exclaimed the housekeeper in her turn. "Wherever did the child come from? Mr Richmond? —no, he ain't to home yet, but he will be directly. Come in, child, and take off your things. Who's this other one?"

"My cousin, David Bartholomew, Miss Redwood. O David! come in. Don't go till Mr Richmond comes."

"Yes, come right in," said Miss Redwood, heartily. "You're just in time for tea; for the minister's been out as usual all the afternoon. He had to ride to Suffield, and he ain't home yet. Come right in here."

She drew Matilda, and David followed, into the little dining-room, where the lamp shone, and the tea-table stood looking very hospitable. David made some proposition of going back to the hotel and Norton; but Matilda was very urgent that he should not, and Miss Redwood very positive on the same subject; and, to Matilda's surprise, David made no great opposition. He sat down quietly enough. Meanwhile the housekeeper took off Matilda's wrappings, and examined her with her eyes.

"La! it *does* look natural to see you!" she broke out. "But you ain't so little as you was; and my!—but I suppose it's New York."

"What's New York?" inquired Matilda, laughing.

"Well, 'tain't so easy to tell. I don't know myself. But it's all over you, from the hair of your head down to the soles of your boots. You ain't the same you was."

"Yes, I am, Miss Redwood; just the same!"

"La! child, you don't *feel* that you've growed, do you? Folks grow in'ardly and out'ardly; and they change, too, in'ardly and out'ardly; and it's other folks that see it, not them."

"But how do you think I'm changed, Miss Redwood? I am sure you're mistaken."

The housekeeper gave another benevolent, keen look at her, smiling a little, and then went off into her pantry without answering.

"It's all right. I made gingerbread to-day," she said, coming out with a beautiful loaf of that article. "Have you had any dinner? I'll be bound you'd like some beef and eggs. Wait a bit and you shall have it. Mr Richmond will be all ready for it too, after his ride. I reckon you hain't much to do with handling of spiders now?" This with a sidelong glance at Matilda.

"No, Miss Redwood; I haven't time for such things."

"How do you expect to keep house one o' these days, if you don't know how?"

"That's a great way off," said Matilda, smiling.

"Just as it happens," said the housekeeper. "You're eleven or twelve this summer; which is it? and you won't be any wiser in the kitchen just by growing older in the parlour."

"I know some things now, Miss Redwood."

"La! child, knowledge ain't all—it's practice; and you ain't in the way to practise much, I can see. That's the fashion now-a-days; young heads filled full and clever, maybe; and hands as empty and useless as ever hands kin be. Now, I don't believe, for my part, that our hands was given us to do nothin'."

"Oh! no—nor I," said Matilda.

"Well, then, what be your hands learning? See if I'm wrong."

Matilda cast about how to answer, for in truth her hands had got no new skill in the past months, although the old skill had come into play very conveniently. While she hesitated, came the welcome sound of the opening and closing of the front door. Mr Richmond was returned. His steps went, however, first upstairs, and then came down and went into the study. Miss Redwood had disappeared and was getting her beef ready in the kitchen. Matilda could wait no longer. Taking David's hand and gently persuading him to allow of her leading, she went to the study door and knocked.

Mr Richmond had just made the fire blaze up; so they had light to see each other by. David stood by and watched the greeting; it was very glad and affectionate, he saw, on both sides, with a certain tender confidence that impressed him. He was surprised also to see that Mr Richmond was so young a man, and so handsome a man; and when the brilliant eyes were turned on himself he was quite susceptible to their fascination. Matilda lost no time.

"David Bartholomew, Mr Richmond; one of my new cousins, you know. And, Mr Richmond, David knows about the Messiah in the Old Testament, and he wants to know if the Messiah is Jesus; and so I wanted him to see you, because you could tell him; and so I got him to come with me."

If David's shyness was at all disturbed by this speech, it was entirely soothed again by Mr Richmond's reception of it, and of him. The genial, frank clasp of his hand, the kindly, free glance of the blue eyes, quite won David, as it was apt to win everybody; and in a minute more he found himself sitting at his ease in this strange house, perfectly contented to be there, and interested to watch Matilda's intercourse with her old friend, and her pleasure in it. There was time for but little, however, before Miss Redwood's activity had got the "beef and eggs" and all the rest of the tea-table in a state of readiness, and her call summoned them into the other room. David made a little demur about staying, instantly overruled both by Mr Richmond and

Matilda, and he sat down with the rest. And if he said little, the other three tongues were busy enough.

"And how do you like New York?" inquired the house-keeper. Matilda's answer was very unqualified.

"Tain't no better a place than this, is it?" the lady asked, rather defiantly.

"It is a larger place, Miss Redwood," said the minister.

"Ain't Shadywalk big enough for a little mite of a thing like her?"

"I don't know," said the minister. "'Big enough' depends upon what she wants, or what anybody wants. I knew a man once who said he had seen everything in the world there was to be seen, and he was quite at a loss what to do with himself. You perceive the world was not 'big enough' for him. And another man once wrote, 'My mind to me a kingdom is.' Difference of taste, you see."

"That first fellow thought his head was only made to set his eyes in, I s'pose," said the housekeeper, dryly.

"Seemed to be all the use he had for it," said the minister.

"But that other man," said Matilda, "was he contented with himself all alone, and wanted nothing else?"

"I hope not," said Mr Richmond, smiling. "That's a new view of the case. Your king, David, hit the truth more surely," he went on, addressing David, "when he said, 'The Lord is the portion of my inheritance.'"

David's eye brightened; but then he said, "I have read the words, but I never understood exactly what he meant."

"Your people, you remember, on taking possession of the promised land, had it divided to them by lot; each tribe and family took its share as it was portioned out to them by Joshua."

"Yes, I know," David answered.

"So from that time each family had its own inalienable lands, which were the inheritance of that family; its portion and riches; for the Hebrews were not in those days a commercial people."

David assented, looking a little surprised.

"What should a man mean, who declared, disregarding all this, that his portion and inheritance was the Lord Himself?"

The boy's keen, intelligent eyes looked deep into the intent blue ones regarding him.

"Sir, I do not know," he said at length. "Was it, that he expected the Highest would give him greater possessions?"

"Notice, he says not his inheritance is *from* the Lord, but is the Lord Himself."

"I don't understand it," said David.

"In another place, when he was nearly done with earthly possessions, he says again, 'My flesh and my heart faileth ; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever.' It is an inheritance that exists beyond time, you see."

"I don't understand it, sir," David repeated.

"And in that sixteenth psalm he goes on to declare his content in his portion, in that it is not of earth,—'The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places ; yea, I have a goodly heritage.' There is a word in the New Testament that explains it," Mr Richmond went on, looking keenly at David ; "a word of one who was in the same case ; and he says of the children of God, 'And if children, then heirs ; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Messiah.'

David started and shivered, as if a nerve had suddenly been touched ; but Mr Richmond went on to something else, as if he had not observed it. All through supper time he was so gentle, pleasant, and spirited too in his talk, that the boy, who was unaccustomed to such society, felt the charm holding him ; and Matilda, who had not known it for long, felt like a flower opening to the sunshine.

CHAPTER X.

AFTER tea Mr Richmond led the way back to his study. The first thing he did there was to make the fire blaze up merrily ; and then, just as David was thinking how to take leave, the blue eyes came full round upon him, with a look as bright as the fire-shine.

"And so," he said, "you are seeking after your Messiah?"

David seemed tongue-tied ; he said nothing ; he bowed slightly.

"How far have you got?"

"Far enough to be confused, sir."

"Ay! How is that?"

"I feel myself too ignorant yet to be able to judge. Our wise men are saying—I heard them saying—that if Messiah come not soon, He must *have* come." David's colour changed even as he spoke.

"Do you know anything of the New Testament, the record of the life and teaching, and death and resurrection, of Jesus?"

"Very little," David answered. "Matilda has shown me passages in those writings, which have struck me very much," he added, as if with difficulty.

"I should think they would. Well, when a thing is to be done, the best way is to do it. Suppose you take the book in your hands now, and let me direct your attention to one or two things more."

David was very ready. He took the book Mr Richmond placed in his hands, and drew near to the table, while Matilda on her part seized another Bible and did likewise. Mr Richmond had been lighting the lamp. Before he had finished his preparations, David began—

"But that story of the resurrection is a very unlikely one."

"Do you think so? The same might be said of the crossing of the Red Sea by your fathers."

"That is well enough attested by witnesses," said David, proudly raising his head.

"So is this. If a thing can be made sure by the testimony of credible witnesses, this has been; witnesses who were ready to go to the death in support of their words, and who did so die, many of them."

"But," said David, "our Messiah was to be the King of our people; and your Christ belongs to the Gentiles."

"Thank God He does!" said Mr Richmond, smiling. "But now let us see if you are correct in that first statement."

"He was to be a King on David's throne," interrupted the boy.

"He is. Wait! Do you remember, in the promise to Abraham it was said that all the families of the earth should be blessed in him?"

"Yes."

"And Isaiah declares, 'In that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek.'"

"Yes, but they will come to Messiah; not the Messiah go to them," said David, lifting his head with the same air again.

Mr Richmond answered in the words of Isaiah.

"Behold my servant, whom I uphold! mine Elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my Spirit upon Him: He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.' And again in the forty-ninth chapter—and, Master Bartholomew, you know that these words were spoken of the Messiah—' And now, saith the Lord, that formed me from the womb to be His servant, to bring Jacob again to Him: Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength. And He said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel:

I will also give Thee for a light to the Gentiles, that Thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.'"

Matilda looked eagerly at David as these words were finished. The boy's face was troubled and dark. He made no answer.

"Now let us see how those words were to be fulfilled," Mr Richmond went on. "It is a hard reading for you ; but we are seeking the truth, and you are seeking it. The Apostle John, one of the servants and witnesses of Christ, says, 'He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.'"

David looked up with a white face. "If that is true," he said. "I just want to know whether that is true."

"You know Isaiah said it would be true. 'Who has believed our report ?' 'He is despised and rejected of men ; . . . we hid as it were our faces from Him ; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.'"

"Some of the rabbis held that there were two Messiahs," David said.

"Because they knew not how to understand of one the various seemingly contradictory things, which were and are all fulfilled in Jesus."

"Of Nazareth ?" said David.

"Yes ; He lived there, but He was born in the city of David. Come, you do not know Him, and it is needful you should. Let us read this first chapter of John all through."

They read slowly, with many interruptions. David had explanations to ask, and then there were prophecies to consult. The boy's eagerness and excitement infected his companions ; the reading began to take on a sort of life and death interest, though Mr Richmond kept it calm, with some difficulty.

His next proposition was, that they should go through the life of Christ regularly ; and they began with the first chapters of Luke. Nothing that Matilda had ever known in her life was like the interest of that reading. David was startled, curious, excited, as if he were beginning to find the clue to a mystery ; though he did not admit that. On the contrary, he studied every step, would understand every

allusion, and verify every reference to the Old Testament Scriptures. The boy's cheeks were flushed now, like one in a fever. The hours flew.

"My boy," said Mr Richmond, laying his hand on David's open book, "we cannot finish all that we want to do this evening."

David looked up, pushed his hair off his face, and recollect ed himself.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said. "I have taken up a great deal of your time."

"You shall have a great deal more," said Mr Richmond, smiling; "but we had better sleep upon it first. And pray," he added, soberly, "pray that if this Jesus be indeed He whom you seek, you may know Him."

David bowed silently, feeling too much apparently to say anything. When, however, he would have taken leave, Mr Richmond detained him and would not hear of it. Norton, he said, would not miss him; he would be gone to bed by this time, tired of waiting; and they would send and invite him to breakfast. To Matilda's surprise, and as well to her huge delight, she saw that David was won by the influence that had long been so potent with her, and made no very great opposition. Miss Redwood was called in to prayers, and after that the little family separated for the night.

Matilda thought she surely would not go to sleep soon; but she did, nearly as her face touched the pillow. So it was not till she awoke in the morning that she could think over her happiness. It was early yet; the sunbeams striking the old cream-coloured tower of the church, and glittering on the pine leaves here and there. How delicious it was! The spring light on the old things that she loved, and the peaceful Shadywalk stillness after New York's bustle and roar. And David Bartholomew in Mr Richmond's house! and Norton coming to breakfast! With that, Matilda jumped up. Perhaps she might help Miss Redwood; at any rate, she could see her.

Miss Redwood was in full blast of business by the time Matilda's little figure appeared at the kitchen door.

"Don't say your up, and down!" said the housekeeper.

"Yes, Miss Redwood; I thought perhaps I could help you."

"Do you wear dresses like that into the kitchen?" the housekeeper asked, with a side-long glance at the beautiful merino Matilda had on.

"I don't go into the kitchen now-a-days."

"Thought not. Nor you don't never put on a frock fit to make gingerbread in, now, do you?"

"I don't think I do."

"Well, what are your gowns good for then?"

"Good for?" said Matilda; "why, they are good for other things, Miss Redwood."

"I don't think a gown is worth much that is too good to work in; it is just a bag to pack so many hours of your life in, and lose 'em."

"Lose them!—how?"

"By not doin' anythin', child! What's life if it ain't busy?"

"But don't you have company dresses, Miss Redwood?"

"I don't let company hinder *my* work much," said Miss Redwood, as she shoved a pan of biscuits into the oven of the stove. "What do you think 'ud become of the minister?"

"Oh, yes!" said Matilda, laughing; "but then, you see, I haven't got any minister to take care of."

"Maybe you will, some day," said Miss Redwood, with a kind of grim smile; "and if you don't know how, what'll become of you? or of him either?"

It seemed a very funny and very unlikely supposition to Matilda. "I don't think I shall ever have anybody to take care of but mamma and Norton," she said, smiling.

"I s'pose they've money enough to make it easy," said Miss Redwood. "But somehow that don't seem to me livin'."

"What, Miss Redwood?"

"That sort o' way o' goin' on;—havin' money do all for you, and you do nothin'. Havin' it do all for your friends

too. I don't think life's life without you have somebody to work for—somebody that wants you, and that can't get along without you."

"Oh ! *they* want me," said Matilda.

"Maybe, but that ain't what I mean. 'Tain't dependin' on you for their breakfast in the mornin', and their tea at night, and their comfort all day. You have folks to do that. Now I wouldn't give much for life if I couldn't make nice light biscuits for somebody, and see that their coffee was right, and the beefsteak just as it had oughter be, and all that. I used to have some one to do it for," said Miss Redwood, with something of pathetic intonation in her voice ; "and now," she added, cheerily, "it's a blessin' to do it for the minister."

"I should think it was," said Matilda.

"There is another Friend one may always work for," said the voice of the person they were speaking of. Both his hearers started. The door of the dining-room was a little ajar, and he had quietly pushed it open and come in. "Miss Redwood, how about breakfast ? I have a sudden summons to go to Suffield."

"Again !" said the housekeeper. "Well, Mr Richmond—in two minutes. La ! it's never safe to speak of you ; you're sure to know it."

"I didn't hear anything very bad," said the minister, smiling.

Norton had come to breakfast. David made his appearance, looking pale and heavy-eyed, as if he had sat up half the night. Mr Richmond looked at him attentively, but made no remark ; only to both the boys he was exceedingly kind and gracious ; engaging them in talk that could not fail to interest them ; so that it was a gay breakfast. David was not gay ; indeed, that was rarely a characteristic of his ; but he was gentle, and gentlemanly, and very attentive to his host. After prayers Mr Richmond went out into the hall, and came back in his overcoat.

"My boy," he said, laying his hand affectionately on David's shoulder, "I should like to sit down with you, and

go on with our reading ; I meant to give the first of the morning to it ; but I have a call of duty that takes me away. I shall see you at dinner or this evening ; meanwhile, this is your home. Take care of him, Matilda."

So Mr Richmond went away. Norton had received, and refused, a similar invitation. David did not refuse it.

"No," said Norton ; "I must be nearer those flower-beds. Come along, Pink ; we'll go and make our calculations. Davy, you'll come and see Briery Bank ? It's jolly this morning ; and this afternoon we'll go take a drive."

"I should like to do a great many things," said Matilda ; "only there'll never be time for them all. However, we'll go first and see about the tulips and hyacinths."

David went with them so far, and looked at the place ; but after that he disappeared. Matilda and Norton had a delightful day, overseeing the garden work, and arranging for more garden work to be done ; then lunching together at the hotel, for so he persuaded her, and going on with their operations afterwards. At tea-time Matilda went back to the parsonage alone ; Norton said he was tired and sleepy, and did not want to hear reading, but he would come to breakfast again.

David was not pale, but flushed now, with excited eyes. All Mr Richmond's talk and manner at table were kindly and soothing as possible ; and Matilda could see that he liked David, and that David liked him ; but the look of the latter puzzled her. It came from disturbance so much deeper than her little head had ever known. Immediately after tea the study lamp was lit, and the books were opened.

"What have you read to-day, Master Bartholomew ?" Mr Richmond asked.

"Just two chapters," said the boy.

"Of Luke ?"

"Yes, sir. Mr Richmond, those people, Zechariah, and Simeon, and the rest, they were Jews ?"

"Yes."

"And they kept the law of Moses ?"

"Faithfully."

"And they thought that Jesus was the Promised One ?"

"They did not *think*—they knew, by the teaching of the Spirit of God."

"But," said David, "the writer of this did not wish to discredit the law of Moses ?"

"Not at all. Let us go on with our history."

The reading began again, and went on steadily for some hours. As before, David wanted to verify everything by references to the prophets. His voice trembled sometimes; but he kept as close to business as possible. The first chapters of Matthew excited him very much, with their declarations of things done "that the Scriptures might be fulfilled;" and the sermon on the mount seemed to stagger the boy. He was silent a while when it had come to his turn to read; and, at last looking up, he said—

"If people took *this* for a rule of life, everything in the world would have to be turned round."

"Precisely," said Mr Richmond. "And so the word says—'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.'"

"Do you think anybody really lives like this ?"

"Oh ! yes," said Mr Richmond.

"I never saw anybody who did," said David; "nor anything like it;—unless," he added, looking up, "it is Matilda there."

Matilda started and flushed. Mr Richmond's eyes fell on her with a very moved pleasure in them. Neither spoke, and David went on with the reading. He was greatly struck again, in another way, with the quotation from Isaiah in the thirteenth chapter, and its application; indeed, with the whole chapter. But when they came to the talk with the woman of Samaria, David stopped short.

"'I that speak unto thee am *He*.' Then He said Himself that He was Messiah ?"

"To this woman, to His twelve disciples, and to two or three more."

"Why not to the whole people?"

"Is it likely they would have believed Him?"

David pondered.

"They asked Him once the direct question—'How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be Messiah, tell us plainly.'"

"What did He say?"

"He said, 'I told you, and ye believed not; the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me.'"

"Then they thought perhaps He was Messiah?"

"The people on one or two occasions were so persuaded of it, that they wanted to take Him by force and make Him king."

"And He refused?"

"He refused. You know, He came 'to give His life a ransom for many; not to enjoy worldly honour.'

"But how then should He save Israel from all their enemies?"

"Who are Israel's enemies? 'He shall redeem Israel from all his *iniquities*;' and when once they turn to the Lord, there will be no other enemies that can work them harm. You know it was always so."

David sighed, and the reading went on. But again he started at the fourth chapter of Luke, and the words read by the Lord from Isaiah, and His appropriation of them. David stopped.

"Here it is again," he said. "'This day is this Scripture fulfilled.' That is plain."

"Nothing could be plainer. But they would not see it."

David paused still, and then said, with some difficulty, "I want to know the truth. Because—if He is Messiah,—He is my King!" And a dark gleam, partly of pain, partly of incipient loyalty, crossed his face. Mr Richmond's eyes flashed.

"Come on," he said; "let us see whether He is Messiah."

The parables indicating the taking away of their privileges from the Jews and giving them to the Gentiles, were

hard reading. David stopped to understand them, and looked very black. When they came to the discourses of Christ with the Jews, David's excitement grew very great, though he controlled himself. And just there came a summons to Mr Richmond, which it was impossible to pass by. He was forced to go, and left the two younger ones at the table. For a few minutes they were silent; and then David rose up, pale with intense feeling, and took his book. Matilda looked at him inquiringly.

"I must find it out by myself," he said; and walked to the door.

"David!" cried Matilda, "shall I call you when dinner is ready?"

"No, don't. I don't want dinner. And I can't go with you to look up Norton. Can you do without me?"

Matilda assured him of that, feeling quite at home in Shadywalk. And as it was about eleven o'clock, she thought to look up Norton would be the best thing she could do.

So she went down the old village street, where every step was full of memories, feeling very glad to see it again. She would have liked to stop and visit several people; but she knew Norton would be impatient for her; and so he was. He was overseeing the uncovering of his bulbs to-day.

"Twelve o'clock, Pink; twelve o'clock! And this is the first I have seen of you since breakfast! What have you been doing?"

"We've been busy, Norton."

"Where's Davy?"

"At the parsonage. He's busy."

"Look at those hyacinths. Up already, all of an inch above ground. It's well I came to see after them."

"What makes them so yellow, Norton, instead of green?"

"Why, because they've been covered up and shaded from the sun. A little longer, and they would have been spoiled."

"How beautiful it would be, Norton, if we had our two new beds planted, all full of tulips and hyacinths!"

"Ah! wouldn't it!" repeated Norton. "You see, we

were a bit too late about it last fall ; or I'll tell you, it was that illness kept us away. We'll have 'em next year ! What have you and David been doing yonder ? ”

“Reading,” said Matilda, doubtfully.

“Reading what ? ”

“Mr Richmond and David were reading together.”

“That's jolly ! ” said Norton. “David and the parson ! What's come over Bartholomew ? Where's he going to get dinner ? ”

“He didn't come with me, and I don't think he was coming.”

“Let him stay and read, then,” said Norton. “If he can afford it, we can. Pink, we'll go and get something presently—as soon as I see all this mulching off.”

They managed to employ themselves all the rest of the day, dining at the hotel, overseeing work in the grounds of Briery Bank, roaming about the place and enjoying its spring sweetness ; talking over what they thought ought to be done, and making a very nice holiday of it generally. Towards evening, Norton was persuaded to return with Matilda to the parsonage, perhaps urged by a little curiosity of his own. David had not been seen, Miss Redwood reported.

Neither did he come when tea-time came ; and when sought in his room, it was discovered that he was not there. Matilda was very much exercised on this subject, but Mr Richmond took it quietly. Norton declared it was just like David Bartholomew.

“I don't think it is, Norton,” said Matilda ; “for he is always polite.”

“Except this time,” said Norton.

“We'll not except this time, if you please,” said Mr Richmond, pleasantly. “Things are different from their seeming, oftentimes.”

It was Saturday evening, and the minister was busy in his study. The two children kept Miss Redwood company in the dining-room. It was a great falling off from last evening, Matilda thought ; nevertheless she had a very

entertaining talk with Miss Redwood about people and things in Shadywalk ; and Norton listened, half amused and half sleepy. Mrs Candy had been absent from Shadywalk near all winter in New York.

"In New York!" exclaimed Matilda. "And I never saw her or Clarissa!"

"She didn't come to see you, then?" said Miss Redwood. "I guess she was skeered o' something. But la! New York must be a queer place."

"Why now?" Norton asked.

"Seems as if folks couldn't be runnin' round in it all winter long, and manage to keep out o' sight."

"That's its peculiarity," said Norton.

"I s'pect a great deal could happen there, and the world not know," the housekeeper went on.

"Much more than what it does know," said Norton.

"I allays think sich must be poor kind o' places. Corners that the world can't see into ain't healthy. Now I like a place like Shadywalk, that you know all through ; and if there's something wrong, why, it has a chance to get mended. There's wrong enough here, no doubt ; but most of it'll bear the light of day. And most of us are pretty good sort o' folks."

"Now that Mrs Candy is out of town!" Norton remarked.

Matilda had a great deal to hear about Sunday-school people, and her friends in Lilac Lane ; for Lilac Lane was there yet, Miss Redwood observed. Through it all, Matilda watched for David's coming in. But the evening ended, and he came not.

It hurt a little the joy of her Sunday waking up, which else would have been most joyous. Norton was in the house this time ; he had consented to be at the parsonage for the Sunday. Monday morning they were all to go home by the earliest train. So there was no drawback to Matilda's joy except this one. It was delightful to hear the old bell once more ; delightful to see the spring light streaming between the pines, and lighting the ugly old church tower ; pleasanter

than any other beautiful one to Matilda's eyes. With all the coming delights of the day crowding upon her mind, she rose and dressed, hoping that David would come to breakfast.

But he did not.

The sweet Sabbath-day moved on slowly, with its services in the old church, and its pleasant talk and society in the house; the Sunday school hours; the meeting old friends and acquaintances; but dinner and Sunday-school were over, and nothing was heard of David Bartholomew.

"What has become of him?" said Mr Richmond, as he and Matilda came in after Sunday-school.

"What *can* have become of him, Mr Richmond?" said Matilda.

"Nothing very bad," said Mr Richmond, smiling at her distressed face. "Suppose we go and look him up?"

"Where would you go, Mr Richmond, he has not been *here* since yesterday morning?"

"I think I should try the hotel."

"Do you think he is there? Shall we go?"

"I think we will," said Mr Richmond; and hand in hand he and Matilda went down the street to the corner. Just opposite, a little below, was the Shadywalk house of public entertainment.

Nobody knew David Bartholomew there by name; but in answer to Mr Richmond's inquiries and description of him, the barkeepers stated that such a young gentleman had certainly come there the day before, and was in room No. 45. He had scarcely been seen since he entered the house, the man said; had refused almost everything that was offered him; but anyhow he was there.

Where was room No. 45? A man was sent to direct them to it; and Mr Richmond and Matilda went up the stairs and along a gallery. No. 45 was at the end of the gallery.

"I will wait here for you, Matilda," Mr Richmond said. "I think you had better go alone to see him—at first."

CHAPTER XL

MATILDA went to the door and knocked. She heard nothing, and was obliged to knock again. Then the door opened, and David stood before her. What to say to him Matilda had not just determined, and while she hesitated he stepped back, mutely inviting her to enter. Matilda went in, and he closed the door. She was afraid to speak when she saw his face, it was so pale and disturbed. But he prevented her.

"I have found it out, Matilda," he said. "It's all true."

Matilda started and looked up at him to see what he meant.

"I know it now," he said. "He *is* the Messiah! He is my Messiah; He is my King. But—my people, my people!"—

Breaking off abruptly with this cry, David sat down at a little table where he had been sitting—for his Bible was open upon it—and put his head down in his hands and burst into tears. And Matilda had never seen anybody weep as she saw him then; nor in her childishness had supposed that a boy could; the little deal table shook under the strength of his sobs. Matilda was bewildered and half frightened; she stepped back into the gallery, meaning to summon Mr Richmond; but Mr Richmond was not there; and she went back again, and stood, much distressed, waiting until this paroxysm of pain should have passed by. It lasted some time. Probably David had not shed a tear until then, and speaking to her had broken down the barrier. Matilda did not know what to do. At last she put her hand timidly among the thick dark curls which lay lower than she had ever seen them before, and spoke.

"Dear David! don't—please don't do so!"

He heard and heeded the anxious little voice, for the sobs lessened, and presently he raised himself up, and, as it were, shook them off. But Matilda thought he looked very sad yet. She waited silently.

"You see, Matilda," he said, "I understand it all now. And *they* don't!"

"Who don't, David?"

"My people," he said, sadly. "I see it all now. They did not know Him—they did not know Him! And so they lost Him. You know what He said,—the kingdom is 'taken from them, and given to another nation, bringing forth the fruits thereof.' So they are scattered abroad on the face of the whole earth. And still they don't know Him!"

"But you do, David?" said Matilda, earnestly.

"Tilly, I wish my life was longer, to use it for Him. I wish my hands were stronger, to do His service! But all I am is His, every bit of it, and all I have; from this day for ever."

The boy stood, with a kind of sad joyfulness, very quiet, with folded hands, speaking hardly as it seemed to Matilda, but perhaps to angels and the Lord Himself.

"Won't you come and tell Mr Richmond?"

"Certainly!" he said, starting from his attitude.

"When we heard nothing of you for ever so long, I grew troubled; I didn't know what had become of you; and then Mr Richmond proposed that we should come here and look after you. You'll come to the parsonage to-night, David? you know we are all going away to-morrow morning."

"I'll be ready in two minutes."

Matilda waited while he washed his face and brushed his hair; then they went down-stairs and found Mr Richmond. He stretched out his hand to David, which the boy took with a flitting change of colour, that told of some difficulty of self-command. However, in a moment his words were firm.

"I have found my Messiah, sir, where you bade me look for Him. He is *my* Messiah, and my King, and I am His

servant. I wish I could be His servant twenty times over!"

"Why?"

"One life is too little to give."

"You may serve Him to the ages of the ages. Service shall not end with *this* life, do you think so?"

Then David lifted up his dark eyes and smiled. Matilda had always known him a very grave boy; perhaps partly for that reason this smile seemed to her like a rift of light between clouds, so sweet and bright. It filled Matilda with so much awe that she did not open her lips all the way to the parsonage. Nor did Mr Richmond say much.

They were in danger of being a silent party at tea, too; only I think the minister exerted himself to prevent it. Matilda had no words for anything, and indeed could hardly eat her supper; as often as she dared, she stole a look at David. For he did not look at all like himself. He was grave; to be sure that was like him; only now it was a new sort of high, sweet gravity, even gentle and humble in its seeming; and if he was silent, it was not that he was not ready and willing to speak when there was occasion. But Matilda guessed he had too much to think of to want to talk much. Norton was perhaps a little curious as to what there was between his three companions; and Miss Redwood was seldom free with her tongue in the minister's presence. Mr Richmond, as I said, had to exert himself, or the silence of the tea-table would have been too marked.

They all went to church together. Matilda caught a look of extreme surprise on Norton's face when he saw that David was one of the party; but there was no time for explanations then. Little Matilda thought she had hardly ever been so happy in her life. In the old place, Mr Richmond preaching, and David and Norton beside her, one of them there in heart as well as in person. The singing was sweet, and the prayers were happy.

Coming back from church, Matilda and Norton fell a little behind the others.

"What's come over David Bartholomew?" Norton whispered. "Politeness?"

"Oh no, Norton; not politeness. He will tell you himself."

"Davy's strong on politeness," said Norton. "I didn't know but it was that. Politeness took *me*; but, of course, to take Davy, it would have to be a most extraordinary and uncommon sort of politeness. I can hardly believe my eyes yet."

"You always said Mr Richmond was a brick, Norton," said Matilda.

"Yes, but you never heard me say David Bartholomew was another, did you?"

"Well, but he *is*, Norton."

"He *is*! Phew! that's news."

They came to the parsonage door, and Matilda could not reply. Going in, Mr Richmond said to them that he had something to talk with David about, and that they must not sit up if they were tired. So he and Davy turned into the study, and Norton and Matilda went on into the dining-room, where Miss Redwood was sitting with her Bible. Then David's head was put into the room after them. "Tell Norton for me, please, Matilda," he said, and went back.

"Tell me what?" said Norton.

Matilda did not know how to begin.

"Well, you've got home," remarked the housekeeper closing her book. "Was there many out?"

"Would have been more if you hadn't stayed at home, Miss Redwood," Norton replied.

"When you're as old as I am, my young gentleman, you'll know that folks don't do things without reasons."

"Ah!" said Norton, "but are they always good reasons?"

"That's their own look out," said the housekeeper. "What did you go to church for this evening, for instance?"

"I've just been telling my sister," said Norton. "But what, in the name of Rabbi Solomon, and all the Rabbis, ever took David Bartholomew there?"

"Ain't he a Jew ?" said the housekeeper.

"Of course he is. And he don't love Christians, I can tell you, except one here and there."

"He does now," said Matilda, in a low voice.

"What ?" said Norton.

"He loves Christians now, Norton. And he loves Jesus. He is a Christian himself."

"David Bartholomew a Christian !" exclaimed Norton.

Matilda nodded. Her eyes were full and her lips were trembling.

"I thought there was something to pay," said the good housekeeper, whose eyes watered for company. But Norton was transfixed with astonishment.

"Pink, what do you mean ?"

"It's true, Norton," said Matilda, nodding again.

"What's made him ?"

"He has been studying the Bible and the New Testament this long while. Now he says he knows."

"And he means it !" said the housekeeper. "I can tell by the look of him."

"Means what ?"

"He means what he says—whatever that is."

"But you said you were thinking something in particular, Miss Redwood."

"Yes; just what he was thinking," said the housekeeper. "He'll never be one o' those Christians that stand on one leg at a time ; that's what I mean. Whoever wants to walk alongside of him, 'll have to step up to the mark."

Norton looked at her, in somewhat disdainful want of comprehension, and then turned to Matilda again.

"Pink, I don't believe a word of it !"

"Why, Norton, I heard him myself, all that he said."

"Mind, he may have found out that his famous old uncles of rabbis don't know anything ; that's very likely ; but I don't believe David Bartholomew has given up being a Jew."

"Why he can't do that, Norton ; he's born so ; but he is a Christian too."

"A man can't be a Christian and a Jew too," said Norton.

"Miss Redwood, can't he?"

"I reckon it's difficult," said the good housekeeper; "and you may depend he's found that out; but he's found it's possible too. Why, what 'ud become of all the Jewish nation if it warn't possible?"

"What should become of them?" Norton asked scornfully.

"Well, there's wonderful things about the Jews in the Bible," said the housekeeper rising; "if the minister was here he'd tell you. And there was an old promise to Abraham, that if I was you I wouldn't run against."

"Run against a promise to Abraham!" said Norton.

"Well, yes," said the housekeeper, setting her chair back at the wall in its place. "I wouldn't like to run against none o' the Lord's words, and this is one of 'em. 'I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee.'

The housekeeper went off and left Matilda and Norton looking at each other. Norton wore a vexed face.

"This is all trumpery," he said. "It will blow away like smoke."

"No, it won't, Norton," said Matilda. "I hope not."

"And how long have you and David been holding secret meetings together to talk about this?"

"I don't know, Norton. But we had better go to bed, I suppose; for Miss Redwood will call us very early to have breakfast before the omnibus comes for us."

"Nonsense to have breakfast!" said Norton. "We shall be home time enough."

"But then you and Davy will have to rush right off to school. Good night."

"Good night," said Norton, in an uncomfortable tone. And they went up to their rooms, leaving David and Mr Richmond still shut up in the study.

It was early, dawn just breaking, when the summons came for them to get up; the dawn of a fair spring morning.

What a visit it had been ! Matilda thought to herself, as she dressed and put up her things in her little hand bag. And as the first sunbeams were glinting on the top of the old tower, she ran down to breakfast. Mr Richmond gave her a very warm greeting, in his quiet way. So did David. He looked bright and well, Matilda saw at a glance. Norton had not by any means got over his discomfiture. He seemed embarrassed as well as uneasy ; watched David with furtive glances, and ate his breakfast in silence. Mr Richmond and Matilda were the talkers.

"Have you had any more difficulties about boots ?" he asked, in the course of the conversation. Matilda looked at him in bewilderment.

" You wrote me some time ago on the subject of a deep question that had to do with boots."

Matilda coloured and laughed, while Norton remarked that boots were a queer subject for deep questions to have to do with.

"Deep questions can spring out of anything—out of your bread and butter," said Mr Richmond. "How is it, Tilly, about the matter of boots ?"

"I have hardly thought about it, Mr Richmond, this long while."

"How is that ?"

"I have had so much else to think of, I believe."

"Studies ?"

"No, sir ; my studies have been a good deal broken off by my being unwell."

"What then ? Can you tell me ?"

Matilda gave briefly the history of her connection with Sarah Staples. She meant to give it briefly ; but the story was too sweet in the telling ; it rather grew long. Yet she did by no means put herself or her own doings in the foreground ; that place was given as much as possible to Mr Wharncliffe and David and the poor family themselves. The minister and the housekeeper were both very much interested.

"Yes," said the former, in conclusion, "I understand, and am satisfied. I see that now boots are boots; and nothing more."

Matilda laughed, for the boys looked mystified.

"Will you tell me, sir," inquired Norton, "how deep questions could spring out of my bread and butter?"

The minister could have smiled at the boy's air, which had much the effect of seeming to put a "poser" to him; but he controlled himself and answered quite gravely.

"Shall we consider them together? or apart?"

"Apart, if you please."

"Well—Bread, you know, daily bread, stands for the matters which support life, in all variety. This question arises,—Who gives this daily bread to you, and gives you power to eat it? And what use does He wish to make of you, that He should give you both?"

Norton was silent.

"You are not prepared with an answer?" said the minister.

"I never thought of the questions before, sir. The second one sounds to me very strange."

"Does it? Do you think the Lord had no purpose to serve, in putting you here and nourishing you up to strength and power?"

"That's for the bread," said Norton after a pause, but not rudely; lifting his eyes to the minister as he spoke.
"You were going to consider the bread *and butter*."

"I think you do not seem disposed to 'consider' anything," said Mr Richmond, smiling; "but, however, I will hope the time of consideration may come. Now for deep question Number three, or Number four,—You have butter to your bread, and plenty of it; what is your duty towards others who have no butter, and others still who have no bread?"

"There's the omnibus, Mr Richmond," said the house-keeper. And there was no more talk. Only a hurried putting on of hats and seizing of hand-bags; eager, warm, hearty grasping of hands in good-bye; and then the three

travellers were in the omnibus and rolling along the parsonage lane and out at the gate.

What a visit it had been ! Matilda was so full of content that she was still. Not a very noisy child at any time, she was now as quiet as a mouse, just with content. Three days of sweet pleasure, three days of country skies and greening grass and free sunshine ; three nights and mornings of parsonage delights. And more than that ; more than all she had hoped for ; David going home with *his* deep questions solved and his calls of duty and privilege met. What would they think at home ? and how would they find out about it ? "He was one of those lost pieces of silver," thought Matilda, smiling to herself ; "and Jesus has found him !"

"What's so amusing ?" inquired Norton. He was rather in a disordered state of mind, and certainly seemed to see nothing amusing himself.

Matilda looked up, still smiling, though her eyes were dewy, and from him glanced at David. Their eyes met. His smile answered hers, quite recognising its meaning. Norton whistled. There was no other passenger in the omnibus ; and he whistled half way to the station.

In the cars the same content possessed Matilda. It was still early morning ; she thought the river had never looked so pretty as in the crisp light of that hour ; nor the opposite hills so lovely as under those wreaths of bright vapour which lay along the hillsides ; nor ever was there a blue sky more smiling. She glanced at her two companions. Norton was not smiling by any means ; his discomposure had not gone off, whatever it might mean ; and he eyed David now and then with a jealous, doubtful expression. David was grave enough, but not as usual. Matilda looked again and again, to see how different the thoughtful bright calm of his face was from the old dark gloom that used to be there ; and then her eyes turned to the sunny river and sky and hills, with a glad feeling of the harmony between things outward and inward. Before long, David had taken out a little book and was deep in

the study of it ; which he never interrupted till they reached Poughkeepsie. There Norton rushed out, to get something to eat, he said ; though Matilda guessed it was rather to get rid of himself for a minute. Many other people left the car on the same errand ; and David looked up from his book and came over to Matilda.

"Well," said he, "how are you getting along ?"

"Nicely. I am so happy, David."

"So am I," said he, gravely. "All the world is new, and it seems to me I see the sun shine for the first time."

"See the sun shine ?" repeated Matilda, doubtfully.

"Yes," said he, smiling.

"But you don't look at it, David. You are reading all the while."

"I see it, though. Now I know what the prophet Malachi meant by the sun of righteousness. Do you remember, Matilda ? I guess you don't ; but I know the words—

'And risen to you, ye who fear my name,
Hath the sun of righteousness—and healing in its wings.'

I feel that now. I never could understand it before."

"There are a great many things that we cannot understand till we feel them. Are there not, David ?"

"I suppose so," he said, thoughtfully.

Their talk stopped there ; and presently the people who had gone out came pouring back. Norton brought a great piece of sponge-cake to Matilda.

"Thank you, Norton, but I'm not hungry. I've just had breakfast a few minutes ago."

"You hadn't time to eat."

"Yes, I had. You spent your time talking, I suppose, you and Mr Richmond. That's the reason you are hungry."

Norton sat down and ate his sponge-cake, and spoke no more till the train got in. The carriage was in waiting ; took the two boys immediately to school, and carried Matilda and the bags home.

She wondered all day how and when David's disclosure would be made, and how it would be taken at home. She

had a good many questions to answer herself, even Judy seeming curious to know what they had been doing, and how they had spent the time, and why they had not come home on Saturday ; especially what David had done with himself, and why he had taken it into his head to go at all. Matilda declined to enter into any discussion of David's affairs, and left him to speak for himself. But much she wondered how he would, and whether he would, and when he would.

It happened that evening that there was no company, and the family were all gathered together in the little reception-room, talking over the children's reports, and discussing plans for the coming summer. Matilda's heart began to beat, for she saw that David was thoughtfully still, and that Norton, in a corner, only talked by jerks, as it were, and sat turning over and over one of his school-books, with an odd air of expectancy. Yes ; certainly he knew that David was going to speak, and was waiting for it. Matilda could think of nothing else ; her talk all came to an end.

"Norton hasn't much to say to-night," Mrs Bartholomew remarked. "No more than if he were my boy."

"I haven't anything to talk about," said Norton, looking at nothing but his book.

"Matilda has lost her tongue too," said Judy.

"She never had such a one as yours," replied her grandmother ; "you must remember that. It isn't such a loss in the house."

Judy seemed inclined to pout at this ; but then her attention was turned to her brother, who began rather suddenly.

"May I speak, grandmamma ?"

"I shall be very happy to hear," said Mrs Lloyd, smiling.

"I am not so sure of that," said David ; "at least, not of you all ; though I really have something to say."

All eyes turned to David. Norton looked up at him from under his brows, with a strange expression of curiosity and displeasure. Matilda only looked away. David hesitated, then went on very calmly and gently.

"You know, mother and grandmother, that I have been very strong in my love for my own people, and very strong in my sympathies with them."

"Is it in the past tense?" asked Mrs Lloyd.

"And very fixed in my prejudices against what was not Jewish—against what in your beliefs was contrary to mine."

"We all know that," said his mother, a little bitterly.

"Is *that* in the past tense?" demanded Judy.

"I joined with my people in expecting the Messiah, and hoping for Him."

"Did you?" said his mother.

"I have changed," said David, slowly. "I have been studying these things for some time past; I have studied and studied; and now I know. Our Messiah *has* come; our people did not know Him; and—they lost Him. I know now that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah!"

A scream of startled rage from Judy broke in upon the closing utterances of this speech. She prevented everybody else.

"You do not mean to say that, David Bartholomew!" she exclaimed, jumping out of her chair and standing before him. "You don't mean it?"

"Do I ever say what I do not mean, Judy?" he answered, gravely.

"Say it again. Say you have left us and gone over to the Christians."

"Judy, are you not ashamed?" cried Mrs Bartholomew. "What do you think of your mother?"

"Nothing," said Judy. "I'm not talking of you, mamma. You are neither one thing nor the other. You are nothing. *Have* you gone over, David?"

"You know what I said," her brother answered. "I believe that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah."

"The Christians' Messiah," said Judy, scornfully.

"Theirs and ours," said David, sorrowfully. "Messiah ben David, the King of Israel."

"Take that!" said Judy, administering a slap on the cheek which was heartily delivered. "You are a mean

good-for-nothing, David Bartholomew! and I wish your name was something else."

All the voices in the room cried out upon Judy except her brother's. His colour changed, back and forth, but he was silent. She stood in the centre of the room like a little fury.

"Judy, Judy! Sit down!" said Mrs Bartholomew. But it was doubtful if Judy heard.

"What do you think your uncle Solomon and Rabbi Nathan will say to you, you mean boy!" she cried. "I am going straight to tell them."

"I will tell them myself, Judy," said David.

"And what do you think they will say to you, hey? You deserve all you'll get. Ugh! What is a Jew who isn't a Jew any longer?"

"I was going to tell you what I am," said David. "Grandmamma, I had not finished what I had to say to you."

"Let him speak, Judy," said Mrs Lloyd.

"If the rest is like the beginning, I don't want to hear it," said Judy.

"You need not hear it," said her mother. "Leave the room, then."

"I wont!" said Judy. "There is nobody here but me to make him ashamed."

"I wish something would make you ashamed," said her mother. "Judy Bartholomew, hold your tongue! Go on, David."

"Mamma, you don't like all this stuff any better than I do."

"I choose to hear it out, though," said Mrs Bartholomew. "Sit down and be silent."

"I will—till I get something else to talk about," said Judy, sitting down as requested. And all eyes turned once more upon David. He was very quiet, outwardly: he had been quietly waiting.

"Grandmamma," he said with a slight smile, "I am as good a Jew as ever I was—("It's a lie," put in Judy—

"unless the rest was!"—"I am as good a Jew as ever I was, and better. I have studied about the Messiah, and knew about Him, and knew that He was promised—the Hope of Israel, and the King of Israel. Now I know that He has come, and I know Him; and He isn't the Messiah that I am hoping for, but"—he hesitated and smiled again—"the Christ I am glad for; the Hope of Israel and the King, and so my King and my Hope. I have given myself to Him to be His servant. I believe in Him—I love Him—and all that I am is His."

Possibly Judy was bewildered by this speech; perhaps she was astonished into silence; at any rate, she sat still and was quiet. Norton tossed his book over and over. Matilda was in such a tumult of delight that she could hardly contain herself; but she made a great effort, and kept it from observation. The ladies seemed somewhat in Judy's condition. At last Mrs Bartholomew spoke.—

"By your last words, what do you mean, David?"

"Mamma," he said, "I meant to make them quite plain. I thought it was right to tell you all. I am the servant of the Lord Jesus Christ."

"Well, so are we all," said his mother. "What do you mean to do, that you proclaim it so publicly?"

"Nothing, mamma; only to follow my Master."

"Follow Him—how?"

"In His own way—obeying His words."

"But people that talk in that way often go into extremes, and do ridiculous things—unlike all the world. I hope that is not what you mean, David?"

"I don't know, mamma," said the boy gravely. "I will do ridiculous things if He command me"—and again a flicker of a smile that came like a flicker of light passed over his face. "The first thing I thought I had to do was to tell you all; He says His servants must confess Him; and to-morrow I will go to my uncles." The smile had faded, and he was very grave then.

"And do you know what they will say to you?"

"I suppose I know," he answered, slowly.

"Is this a very new thing, David Bartholomew?"

"No, mamma. The *finishing* of it is new; it has been growing and preparing for a long while."

"Like you!" said his mother, discontentedly. "Think and think and say nothing—and then come out with your mind, when nobody can change it!"

"And it's all because of her!" Judy exclaimed, starting from her silence and her seat together, and pointing to Matilda. "She has made the mischief. David would never have thought of these low ways, if there had not been somebody to put it into his head. That's what you get, Aunt Zara, by your works."

"Hush!" said Mrs Bartholomew, sharply. "Matilda has nothing to do with it."

"Hasn't she, though?" Judy retorted. "Just ask her. Or ask this boy. Mean little spy! coming into such a house as this to upset it!"

"Hold on, Judy," cried Norton; "you are going too fast."

"Keep yourself out of the mess!" retorted Judy, with great sharpness; "there's enough without you. I say, she is at the bottom of it all; and I wish it was the bottom of the Red Sea with Pharaoh's chariots!"

"Judy, Judy!" said Mrs Bartholomew, angry and half laughing—"hold your tongue, and don't be a fool!"

"You've only one of that name among your children, mamma," said the young lady. "Half's enough."

"What has Matilda done?" Mrs Laval asked, calmly.

"She has been doing ever since she came here," Judy answered.

"What *has* bewitched you, David, though?" his mother inquired. "There was nothing of all this when you went to the catechising?"

"No, mamma. But the study about that time put me on thinking and asking questions; nobody could answer my questions; not even our wise men; until at last I began to ask—where I found the answer."

"Matilda?" said Mrs Bartholomew.

"Matilda helped me a great deal."

"Didn't I say so?" exclaimed Judy.

"But it was her Bible that answered me—hers and my own."

"When did she help you?" Norton broke out from his corner, where he had been tossing his book. "You and she are not such particular friends, that ever I knew."

"Oh, but I think we are now, Norton," said Matilda.

"Yes," said David, with a smile. "And she has been *my* friend for a good while."

"Very well," said Norton, returning to his book, which he tossed over and over with greater exactness than ever.

"I wash my hands of you, both of you," cried Judy. "You'll be a religious poke. O mamma! to think that we should have anything religious in *our* family. And Matilda always was a poke. Whatever will become of us, with two of them!"

"You have more to do with it than you think, Judy," said her brother. "The way Matilda bore your persecutions was the first thing that made me want to know about her religion."

"What persecutions?" Mrs Bartholomew asked; but nobody seemed ready to answer her, and she went on—"Judy, you are a fool. David might change his opinions surely, without being a poke. My son, you do not mean to be different from what you have always been—do you?"

David hesitated, and said, "I hope so, mother."

"Different—how?" she asked, quickly.

"I am the King's servant, mamma," he answered, with a certain steadfastness which had much dignity about it.

"Well, what then? what does that mean?"

"Then, of course, I must do the King's commands, mamma."

"Didn't you always?"

David's answer was prevented by a fresh outburst of Judy's reproaches and charges, which lasted till her brother

took himself out of hearing ; then silence fell. Norton stopped the book exercise and looked about him. Matilda's face he had seen by glimpses ; he knew it was flushed and anxious and glad at once. Mrs Laval and her sister were grave, with different styles of gravity ; one thoughtful, the other vexed. Old Mrs Lloyd was in tears.

CHAPTER XII.

THE atmosphere of the house was very quiet during several successive days, as far as Matilda could observe it. The boys were extremely busy at school; and at home there was no public recurrence of Monday night's discussion. In private Mrs Laval questioned Matilda very closely as to all the particulars of their Shadywalk expedition, and all that she had known for weeks past of David's state of mind. She made no comment on the answers; and Matilda heard no more about the matter, until Saturday morning came. Then when they were at breakfast, Mrs Bartholomew said, in a conciliating tone—

“David, my son; I don't see any necessity for that communication you are proposing to make to your uncles.”

“I must go to see them, mamma.”

“Certainly; that is all just and proper; but there is no occasion to talk to them about your change of views.”

“Then they would believe me what I am not.”

“Well,” said Mrs Bartholomew; “they would a great deal rather believe so than know the truth.”

“Would you have liked me to hide it from you, mamma?”

“I don't know; yes—I think I should.”

“What would have been your opinion of me by and by, when you came to find it out?”

“Just the truth,” said Judy, languidly. “Nothing can make you more of a sneak than you are already.”

“One thing,” said David, firmly. “To get, or try to get, my uncles' money under false pretences. You know they would never give it to a Christian.”

"Judy," said Mrs Lloyd, "another ill-bred word like that, and I send you from the table."

"But, my dear boy," Mrs Bartholomew went on, "you said Monday night that you were as much of a Jew as ever."

"The poor fellow was afraid of falling between two stools," said Judy; "so he clutched at 'em both, without thinking."

"And you are very young; and you do not know what your opinions may be in a few years more. And, in the meanwhile, I am very unwilling that you should offend your uncles. *They* would never get over it."

"I guess they wouldn't," said Judy. "What a time David will have with 'em!"

"Don't you see, my dear," pursued Mrs Bartholomew, "it is unnecessary, and may be premature, and so unwise?"

"Mother," said David, evidently struggling with his feelings, "Messiah has said that He will not own those who do not own Him."

"You'll get nothing out of him, mamma," said Judy. "He is one of Matilda's crazy kind. He is going to get rid of his money as fast as he can; and then he will turn chaplain of some jail, I should think; or else he will get a place as a Methodist parson and go poking into all the poor places of the earth; and then we shall see his name up in bills—'Preaching at the cross corners to-night—Rev. David Bartholomew will speak to the people from a candle-box.'"

David changed colour once or twice, but he said nothing.

"Matilda Laval," said Judy, sharply, "eat your breakfast! He won't want *you* to help him preach."

Matilda wondered privately that the elders were so patient of Judy's tongue and so very silent themselves. They seemed to have thoughts not ready for utterance. At any rate, the breakfast party broke up with Judy having the last word, and scattered their several ways; and Matilda heard no more on David's subject for some time. How the Saturday's work issued she did not know—nothing was said about it in her hearing—and David looked as happy and as

calm as he had done before Saturday. She watched him, and she was sure of that.

One afternoon, it was a Sunday, and the ladies of the family were shut up in their rooms, resting or dressing, Matilda and David were alone in the little reception-room. It was the hour before dinner; Matilda had come in from Sunday-school, and was sitting there with a new book, when David joined her. He sat down beside her, Matilda knew immediately, for a talk; and she shut up her book.

"Matilda, I have been reading about the men with the talents; the five talents, and the ten talents, you know?"

"Yes; I know."

"I am afraid I don't know all my talents."

"What do you mean, David?"

"The talents are whatever is given to us to use for God—and that is, whatever is given to us; for we may use it all for Him."

"Yes, David."

"Well; that means a great deal, Tilly."

"Yes; I know it does."

"And one might easily have talents that one didn't think of; lying by so, and not used at all."

"I dare say they often do," Matilda said, thoughtfully.

"I want you to help me, if you can."

"I help you?" said Matilda, very humbly.

"You have been longer in the way than I. You ought to know more about it."

"I am afraid I don't, though, David. But I guess Jesus will teach us, if we ask Him."

"I am sure of that; but I think He means that we should help one another. What can I do, that I am not doing?"

Matilda thought a little, and then went up-stairs and fetched the card of covenant and work of the old Band at Shadywalk. She put it in David's hands, and he studied it with great interest.

"There is help in this," he said. "There are things here I never thought of. 'Carrying the message'—of course, I

needn't wait till I have finished my studies and am grown up, to do that ; it is easy to begin now."

"Are you going to do *that*, when you are grown up," said Matilda, a little timidly.

"As a profession, you mean. I don't know, Tilly ; if the Lord pleases. I am all His anyway ; I don't care how He uses me. What I want to know is my duty now. Then, Tilly, I have plenty of money."

"That's a very good thing," said Matilda, smiling.

"What shall I do with it ? Do your poor people want anything ?"

"Sarah Staples ? Oh no ! they are getting on nicely. Sarah has learned how to sew on a machine, or partly learned ; and she gets work to do now ; and Mrs Staples is stronger, and is able to take in washing. Oh no ; they are getting along very well."

"There must be others," said David, thoughtfully.

"Yes, plenty, I suppose ; only we don't know them, David ! Perhaps Sarah knows, or her mother."

"What if we were to go and ask them ?"

Matilda decided that it was a capital plan ; and they arranged to go the next Saturday afternoon, when David would be at leisure. And the week seemed long till the Saturday came.

"Pink," said Norton at their dinner, "I will take you into the Park this afternoon."

"Oh, thank you, Norton ! But—I can't go. I have an engagement to go to see Sarah Staples."

"Sarah Staples ! Sarah Staples can wait, and I can't. I have only one Saturday afternoon a-week. It'll be splendid this afternoon, Pink. The Park is all green and flowery, and it's sure to be full. I'm going just at the fullest time."

"I should like to go with you ; but I have business, and I can't put it off."

"I'll wait, Tilly, if you wish," David said.

"I don't wish it at all, David. I would rather not wait."

"Oh, it's *your* business too, is it!" said Norton. "And Pink would rather not wait. Very good."

"It is important business, really, Norton," Matilda pleaded; "it is not for myself."

"That's just what proves it of no importance," said Norton. "What is it?"

"David and I want to see Mrs Staples to find out something we want to know."

"Might as well ask the Sphinx," said Norton, discontentedly.

"I would just as lief tell you what, Norton; only it is something you don't care about, and it would give you no pleasure."

"May as well let 'em go, Norton," remarked Judy, eating strawberries at a tremendous rate; it was not strawberry time, by any means, but these came from the South. "May as well let 'em go; there's a pair of 'em; and they'll run, I guess, till they run their heads against something or other and pull up so; or till they get swamped. *I hope* they'll get swamped."

"What do you mean?" said Norton, gruffly enough.

Judy nodded her head at him in a very lively way over her strawberries.

"They are latter-day saints, don't you know? They are going to feed everybody on custards—not us, you know; we've got strawberries; but the people that haven't. Matilda's going to make them, and Davy's going to carry them round; and they're going out to buy eggs this afternoon. They expect you and me to give 'em the sugar they want."

"Not so sanguine as that, Judy," said her brother, good-humouredly.

Norton looked very much discomposed; but David and Matilda had no time to spend in further talking.

They found Mrs Staples at home, and Sarah too, as it was Saturday afternoon. The little room looked cosy and comfortable; for it was very tidy and very clean, and the mother and daughter were peacefully at work. The plea-

sure manifested at sight of David and Matilda was very lively. Sarah set chairs, and her mother looked to the fire in the stove.

"How does the oven work, Mrs Staples?" Matilda asked.

"Couldn't be no better, and couldn't do no better. I declare it's beautiful! Why, after I got my hand in, I baked a pan o' biscuits the other day; and they riz up and browned, you never see! and the boys was too happy for anything. I wisht you'd seen 'em, just. They thought nothin' ever was so good, afore or since. Yes'm, it's a first-rate oven; bakes apples, too, in the most likely manner."

"How is the neighbourhood, Mrs Staples?" David asked.

"Well, sir, there's nothin' agin the neighbourhood. They be's a little noisy, by times; you can't expect they wouldn't; now the sun's warm in the streets and the children gets out o' their holes and corners. I sometimes think, what a mercy it is the sun shines! and specially to them as hain't no fire or next to none. I often think the Lord's more merciful than what men is."

"Do you think it is men's fault then, other men's, that such poor people haven't fire to keep them warm?"

"Well, whose should it be, sir, if it wouldn't?"

"Might it not be the people's own fault?"

"Sartain!" cried Mrs Staples, "when the money goes for drink. But why does it go for drink? I tell you, sir, folks loses heart when they know there ain't enough to make a fire and buy somethin' to cook on the fire; and they goes off for what'll be meat and fire and forgetfulness too, for a time. And that's because of the great rents, that people that has no mercy lays on; and the mean little prices for work, that is all one can get often, and be thankful for that. It's just 'runnin' a race with your strength givin' out every foot o' the way. And it's allays the rich folks does it," added Mrs Staples, not very coherently.

"Rich people that give the low wages and put on the high rents, do you mean?"

"That's what I just do mean; and I ought to know. If a body once gets down, there's no chance to get up again, and then the drink comes easy."

"Do you know of anybody in distress near here, Mrs Staples?" Matilda asked.

"Half of 'em is, I guess," was the answer.

"But is there anybody you know?"

"Mrs Binn's little boy is unwell," remarked Sarah, as her mother was pondering.

"What's the matter with him?"

"It's a kind o' waste, they say."

"Not a fever, or anything of that kind?" inquired David.

"Oh no, sir; he's been wasting, now, these three or four months."

"And they are not comfortable, Sarah?" Matilda asked.

"There's few is, livin' where those lives," said Mrs Staples; "and of course, illness makes things wuss. No, they're fur from comfortable, I should say."

"They haven't anything to give him," said Sarah low to Matilda.

"Any medicine, you mean?"

"No, Miss Matilda; nothing to eat that he can eat."

"O David!" exclaimed Matilda, "let us go there. Where is it?"

David inquired again carefully about the illness, to be sure that he might take Matilda there; and then they went. Sarah volunteered to guide them. But how shall I tell what they found. It was not far off, a few blocks only; in one of a tall row of tenement houses, grim and dismal, confronted by a like row on the other side of the street. Every one like every other. But inside, Matilda only remembered how unlike it was to all she had ever seen in her life before. Even Lilac Lane was pleasantness and comfort comparatively. The house was sound indeed; there was no tumble-down condition of staircase or walls; the steps were safe, as

they mounted flight after flight. But the entries were narrow and dirty ; the stairways had *never* seen water ; the walls were begrimed with the countless touches of countless dirty hands, and with the sweeping by of foul draperies. Instinctively Matilda drew her own close round her. And as they went up and up, further from the street door, the air grew more close and unbearable ; heavy with vapours and odours that had no chance at any time to feel the purification of a draught of free air. Poor cookery, soapsuds, unclean humanity, and dirty still life, mingled their various smell in one heavy, undistinguishable oppression.

"Oh, why do people build houses so high !" said little Matilda, as she toiled with her tired feet up the fourth staircase.

"For more rents, Miss Matilda," said Sarah, who preceded them.

"For money !" said Matilda. "How tired the people must be that live here."

"They don't go down often," Sarah remarked.

At the very top of the house they were at last. There, in the end of the narrow entryway, on the floor, was—what ? A tumbled heap of dirty clothes, Matilda thought at first, and was about to pass it to go to the door which she supposed Sarah was making for ; when Sarah stopped and drew aside a piece of netting that was stretched there. And then they saw, on the rags which served for his bed covers, the child they had come to see. A little, withered, shrunken piece of humanity, so nearly the colour of the rags he lay upon that his dark shock of matted curly hair made a startling spot in the picture.

"What's the matter, Sarah ?" said Matilda, in a distressed whisper.

"This is Mrs Binn's boy, Miss Matilda, that you came to see."

"*That !* Why does he—why do they put him there ?"

"Mrs Binn's room is so small and so hot. It's there, Miss Matilda ; you'll see it. When she's doing her washing and ironing, the place is so full of steam and so hot ; and there

ain't no room for the bed neither ; and so she put Josh here."

Sarah led the way to Mrs Binn's room, and Matilda followed her in a bewildered state of mind. She saw as soon as the door was opened the truth of Sarah's statements. The attic room was so small that Mrs Binn's operations must have been carried on with the greatest difficulty ; impossible Matilda would have thought them, but there were the facts. One dormer window in the roof was effectually shut up and hindered from its office of admitting air, by the pipe of the stove which passed out through the sash. As it was the end of the week, no washing encumbered the six feet clear of space ; but the stove was fired up and Mrs Binn was ironing, and some clothes were hung up to air. It was neither desirable nor very practicable to go in; only Matilda edged a little way within the door, and David and Sarah stood at the opening.

"What's all to do ?" said Mrs Binn, at this unlooked-for interruption, stopping, iron in hand, and peering at them between shirts and overalls hanging on the cords stretched across the room. She was a red-faced woman ; no wonder ! a small, incapable-looking, worn-out-seeming woman besides.

"This lady has come to see Josh, Mrs Binn."

"What does she want of him ?"

"Nothing," said Matilda, gently ; "Sarah told us how he had been ill a long while ; and we came to see how he was, and what he wanted."

"He won't want anything soon, but a coffin and a grave," said his mother. Matilda wondered how she could speak so ; she did not know yet how long misery makes people seem hard. "How he'll get them, I don't know," Mrs Binn went on ; "but I s'pose"—

Her voice choked, and she stopped there.

"Have you no place to put him but where he is lying?" Matilda asked, by way of leading on to something else.

"No, miss ; no place," said the woman, feeling of her iron and taking up another one from the stove. "He'd perish

in here, if he wouldn't be under my feet. An' I must stand, to live."

"Where do you dry the clothes you wash?"

"Here. I haven't an inch besides."

"I don't see how you can."

"Rich folks don't see a sight o' things," said poor Mrs Binn; "don't like to, I guess."

"Is there not another room in the house that you could have for the sick boy, or that you could do your washing in, and give him this?"

"Room in this house?" repeated the woman. "I'll tell you. There's nigh upon three hundred people living in it; do you think there'd be a room to spare?"

"Three hundred people in *this* house?" repeated Matilda.

"Nigh upon that. Oh, it's close livin', and all sorts, and all ways o' livin', too. I like my room, 'cause it's so high and atop o' everything; but I hear thunder below me sometimes. I wouldn't care, only for the child," she said, in a tone a little subdued.

"David, what can we do?" said Matilda, in a half desparing whisper. David edged himself a little forward and put his question.

"What does the doctor say about him?"

"Doctor!" echoed Mrs Binn. "Did you say doctor? There's no doctor has seen him. Is it likely one would walk up to this chimblly top to see a poor boy like that? No, no; doctors has to be paid, and I can't do that."

"What do you give him to eat? what does he like?"

"What does he like?" the woman repeated. "He don't like nothin' he has, and he don't eat nothin'. 'Tain't 'what we like,' young sir, that lives in these places. Some days he can't swaller dry bread, and he don't care for mush; he'll take a sup o' milk now and then, when I can get it; but it's poor, thin stuff; somethin' you call milk, and that's all."

"Good-bye," said David. "I'll bring him something he will like, perhaps. I hope we haven't hindered you."

"I don't have so many visits, I need quarrel with this

one," said the woman, coming to her door to shew them so much civility ; " Sarah wouldn't bring anybody to make a spectacle of me."

They cast looks on the poor little brown heap in the corner of the entry, and groped their way down-stairs again. But when they got out into the street and drew breaths of fresh air, David and Matilda stood still and looked at each other.

" I never knew what good air meant before," said the latter.

" And even this is not *good*," replied David.

" How does he live, that poor little creature, with not one breath of it ? "

" He doesn't live ; he is dying slowly," said David.

" O David ! what can we do ? "

" We 'll think, Tilly. I 'll carry him some grapes presently. I fancy he wants nothing but food and air. We will contrive something."

" I wonder if there are any other children unwell in that house, Sarah ? " Matilda asked.

" I can't say, Miss Matilda ; I don't know nobody there but Mrs Binn ; and we used to know her before she moved there. Do you want to know of anybody else in trouble ? "

" Do you think of somebody else ? "

" Not a child," said Sarah ; " she's an old woman, or kind of old."

" Well ; who is she ? "

" She's Mrs Kitteredge ; her husband's a brick-mason. Mother used to know her long ago, and she was a smart woman ; but she's had a deal o' pulling down."

" What does she want now, Sarah ? "

" It's too bad to tell you, Miss Matilda ; you've done so much for us already."

" Never mind," said David ; " go on ; let us hear."

" Well "—Sarah hesitated.

" Is she unwell too ? "

" No ; she ain't unwell ; she has been."

" What then ? "

"I don't feel as if I had no right to tell you, sir ; you and Miss Matilda. I spoke before I thought enough about it. She ain't nowise unwell ; but she has had some sort o' illness that has made her fingers all crumple up, like ; they have bent in so, and she can't straighten 'em out, not a bit ; and if you take hold of 'em you can only pull 'em open a little bit. And it hurts her so to do her work, poor thing ?"

"Do what work ?"

"All her work, Miss Matilda—same as if her hands was good. She washes and irons her clothes and his, and cooks for him, and makes her room clean ; but it takes her all day 'most ; and sometimes, she says, she gets out o' heart and feels like sittin' down and givin' up ; but she never does, leastways when I see her. I go in and make her bed when I can ; that's what she hardly can do for herself."

"I should think not !" said Matilda.

"She can't lift her hands to her head to put up her hair, and she suffers a deal."

"Is she so very poor too, Sarah ?"

"No, Miss Matilda ; it ain't that. He gets good wages, and brings 'em home ; but he's a pertiklar man, and he expects she'll have everything just as smart as if she had her fingers."

"Then what can we do for her, Sarah ?"

"I don't know, ma'am. I was thinkin', if she could have one o' them rollers that wrings clothes—it tries her awful to wring 'em with her hands."

"A clothes-wringer ! Oh yes," cried Matilda.

"What is that ?" said David.

"I will shew you. Thank you, Sarah ; it was quite right to tell us. We'll see what we can do."

But, after they had parted from Sarah, the little girl walked quite silently and soberly homeward. David stopped at a grocer's to get some white grapes, and turned back to carry them to the sick child ; and Matilda went the rest of her way alone.

CHAPTER XIII.

DAVID was busy with his books all the evening, and Matilda, however much she wished for it, could get no talk with him. The opportunity did not come before Sunday evening, when they were all at tea in the little reception room. Then David took his cup and his piece of cake and came to Matilda's side, and sat down.

"Dr Berger has been to see that little boy," he said.

"Has he? And what does he say?"

"Says nothing ails him but want."

"Want?" Matilda repeated.

"Want, of everything! Specially, want of food—food good for anything; and of air."

"Want of air!" cried Matilda. "I don't wonder at it. I felt as if I should be unable to breathe if we stayed there much longer. And I was strong and well. Just think, to anybody ill!"—

"He says, if he could be taken into the country, he would begin to get well immediately; and he asked Mrs Binn if she had friends anywhere out of the city."

"What did she say?"

"Said her father and mother and her aunt were all dead long ago; and that she hadn't a friend in the city or out of it. And she gave up work then for a minute or two, and sat down with her apron over her head; the only time I have seen her stop work at all. I think it was her apron, but I don't know; she hid her face in something. But she didn't cry, Matilda—not a drop."

"What can we do, David?"

"I took him some grapes, you know."

"Yes. Could he eat them?"

"Had no sort of difficulty about that."

"What *can* we do, David?" Matilda repeated, anxiously.

"I have thought of this. We might pay the woman for a week or two as much as she gets by her washing, and let her take him into her room and put down her fire and make him comfortable. She cannot open her window; but we can send them a decent bed and some clean coverings and some good things to feed the fellow with. I spoke to Mrs Binn about giving up her washing; she said she couldn't afford to lose her customers. She might manage it for a week or so, though."

"And then! A week or two would not cure him, David?"

"I doubt if any time would, in that air. Perhaps we can get him out into the country by the end of the week or two."

"O David!" Matilda exclaimed, after a few minutes of perplexed thinking. What more she would have said was cut short. They had been speaking very low, but those last two words had come out with a little energy, and Judy caught them up.

"O David, what? You have been plotting mischief long enough, you two; what are you up to? Grandmamma, make them tell. Matilda is making a fool of David. I wish you'd stop it."

David looked up and over towards Mrs Lloyd with a frank smile.

"He don't look much like it," said the old lady, composedly. "What are you afraid of, Judy?"

"Grandmamma, the whole house is getting on end," said the young lady, who was not always choice in the use of her words. "David and Matilda are busy contriving how to make a big hole in the bottom of their two purses that will let out the money easy; and Norton's hair is bristling already with fear."

"Fear of what, you goose?" said Norton, in towering displeasure. "What's their money to me?"

"I thought you wanted it," said Judy, coolly.

"Come here, Norton," said David; "come over here and let her alone. What *are* you afraid of, old fellow? Come, smooth out your wrinkles and let us know."

"I don't know anything about it," said Norton, distantly. "You and Matilda went on an errand yesterday that lets anybody guess what you are up to to-day."

"Guess," said David. "Come, sit down here and guess."

"You are doing what Judy says."

"Holes in purses?" said David. "Go on; what do you think we are making the holes with?"

"Ridiculous stories about poor folks."

"I'll let you judge how ridiculous they are," said David; and he told about the sick boy and Mrs Binn's six foot apartment. Norton's face would not unbend.

"Is that the only sick child in New York?" he asked.

"I am afraid not."

"Then what are you going to do about the others?"

"Help as many of them as ever I can," David answered, gravely.

"Go on, and your money will go to. That's what I said," Norton responded. "Matilda will be only too glad to help you, and throw in all her pennies."

"How would you like to be sick, old fellow, with no lemons at hand, and no grapes?"

"And no wine, Norton, and no sago, and no clean sheets? I know who likes to have his bed changed often. And no cups of tea, and soda biscuit, and blancmange, and jelly, and nice slices of toast."

"What *do* they have?" Norton asked, with some curiosity.

"Some coarse mush; now and then a piece of dry bread and water. Not ice-water, Norton; no ice gets up there."

"Bread and water," said Norton, summing up.

"And to lie in a corner of the entry, Norton, under the roof, because there is no room for you in the only room they have; and no open window ever—and oh, such want of it!"

"Look here!" exclaimed Norton, seizing upon a diversion;

"how came you, Davy, to take Pink to such a place? I just want to know."

"Not a place for a Pink, I acknowledge," said David. "I didn't know myself, Norton, till I got there, what sort of a place it was; or she would not have gone."

"Upon my word!" said Norton. "This is what your goodness is up to. Mamma"—

"Hush," said David, good-humouredly; "she is not going there again, I tell you. Come here and sit down, and tell us what *you* think ought to be done about such a case."

"The city ought to manage it," said Norton, grumbly, sitting down, however.

"How shall we get the city to manage it?"

"I don't know. Davy Bartholomew! you'll never make me understand that it is our business to look up all the people that want something or other, and give them all they want until our own hands are empty."

"You are dealing in generals," said David, smiling. "Come back to the particular case. What ought we to do about this?"

"How came you to know of it?"

"We were told."

"Well—there must be poor people in the world," said Norton; "there always were, and there always will be."

"I suppose so. And the question is, What ought we to do for them?"

"You can't do much," said Norton. "You can make yourself poor, easy enough. Then you'll expect Judy and me to take care of *you*."

"Are you afraid of that, Norton?" said Matilda, laughingly.

"No, Pink; I am not," said Norton; "but you and Davy are just in the way to get into trouble. There's no bottom to New York mud."

"Norton," said David, "will you grant that we ought to do in this matter as the Word of God says?"

"It don't say we are to make fools of ourselves," Norton responded.

"Yes, it does," said Matilda, quickly. Both her hearers looked at her.

"I don't believe it," said Norton.

"Where?" asked David.

"I can't tell; but I know it's there. If I had that little Reference Bible, Davy; it's up in your room"—

"Yes; I can get it," said David; "but wouldn't a Concordance be better for you? I'll fetch one."

"What *are* you talking about, children?" said Mrs Bartholomew, as David went out of the room.

"We have got into a knot, Aunt Judith," said Norton. "Don't *you* get in, or we shall never get out."

"Do get in, mamma," urged Judy, "or David will be tied up. Matilda holding one end of the string, and Norton the other, between them they'll fix him."

"David is able to cut his own knots, or other people's," said Mrs Bartholomew, coolly. "What is all this about, David?"

David had come back in a minute with the Concordance, which he handed to Matilda. "It's a question of Scripture, mamma," he answered. Mrs Bartholomew said "Oh!" and turned away. But Mrs Lloyd watched the group. Matilda was earnestly searching in the pages of the Concordance; David sat waiting, with a little curiosity; Norton with impatient defiance. Matilda was busy for some minutes with one page and another; then, "Here it is!" she said; and looked up. She saw that Mrs Lloyd's attention was fixed, and that Mrs Laval also was listening. She glanced at Norton, then met David's eyes; and then bent her head over her book and read.

"Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. And then, again, in the next chapter, 'We are fools for Christ's sake.'

How would her various hearers take the words? She would not look up to see.

"I am content," said David.

"With what, Davy, my dear?" asked his aunt.

"Content to be a fool for Christ's sake, Aunt Zara."

"Is there any necessity?" she asked, gently.

"Seems so," said David, smiling. "At least, it seems that one must be judged so, Aunt Zara."

"Can't it be avoided by judicious action, Davy?"

"Come and see, Aunt Zara. Draw up here and join our consultation," said the boy, with a certain sweet gracefulness which won her to do just what he asked. She took a chair nearer the group.

"The question is, Aunt Zara, what we ought to do for certain poor creatures that we know of."

"Not for *them*," burst in Norton, interrupting, "but for all the rest. There is no end to the poor creatures! I say, begin as you are to go on."

"We must take things as we find them," said David. "There is no end to the poor creatures; so the question is a big one."

"What is the question?" said Mrs Laval.

In answer to which, David told the story of Mrs Binn and Josh.

"There are hundreds of such people!" said Norton.

"Aunt Zara," said David, "I wanted Norton to agree to submit the question to the Bible. Isn't that fair?"

"Ye-s," said Mrs Laval, cautiously; "I suppose it is. But, my dear Davy, we shouldn't do anything extravagant; the Bible does not require that."

"Shall we see what it does require?"

"Yes; go on," said Mrs Lloyd. "Let us hear what you children can find about it."

"Among my people it was the law"—David began, but his utterance of the words "my people" was no longer lofty, rather tender and subdued—"it was the law, 'When thou dost complete to tithe all the tithe of thine increase in the third year, the year of the tithe, then thou hast given it to the Levite, to the sojourner, to the fatherless, and to the widow, and they have eaten within thy gates and been satisfied; and in the feast of booths, the feast of

ingathering, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow were to share in the rejoicing."

"The tithe is the tenth," remarked Mrs Laval.

"We always give to all the charitable societies," said Mrs Bartholomew;—"always."

"Read, Matilda," said David. "I see you are ready." And Matilda read.

"Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets."

"But, my dear boy!" exclaimed Mrs Bartholomew.

"What, mamma?"

"You don't mean, you cannot mean, that you want to act that out to the letter?"

"What does it mean, mamma?"

"I always thought it meant that we should be considerate of other people's feelings," said Mrs Laval; "kind and thoughtful."

"But the words are very plain," said David.

"And you think really that we ought to give to everybody else the things we want for ourselves?"

"Not that exactly, Aunt Zara; only to give them what we would like to have given if we were in their place—I mean, what we would *have a right* to like to have given, if we were in their place."

"According to that, you would carry to that sick child everything that Norton and Matilda had when they were unwell."

"Such as?"—inquired David.

"Fruit, and oysters, and flowers, and tea at three dollars a pound."

"Tea at three dollars a pound would be lost upon him, for he would not know the difference between that and—I suppose—lower-priced tea. What *can* you get good tea for, Aunt Zara?"

"Tea good for him—for a dollar and twelve cents."

"Tea good for anybody," said Mrs Lloyd. "I have had it good enough for anybody, for a dollar fifty!"

"The other things," said David, returning to his aunt, "why shouldn't he have them, as well as we, Aunt Zara?" Mrs Laval was dumb, I suppose with astonishment as well as the inconvenience of finding an answer; and before anybody else began again, Matilda's soft voice gave forth another verse.

"Blessed is he that considereth the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble."

"Of course," said Mrs Laval; "we do consider the poor."

"Let the child go on," said Mrs Lloyd. "I want to hear all she has to bring."

Matilda went on with Job's declaration.

"If I have withheld the poor from their desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail; or have eaten my morsel myself alone, and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof; (for from my youth he was brought up with me, as with a father, and I have guided her from my mother's womb;) if I have seen any perish for lack of clothing, or any poor without covering; if his loins have not blessed me, and if he were not warmed with the fleece of my sheep; if I have lifted up my hand against the fatherless, when I saw my help in the gate: then let mine arm fall from my shoulder blade, and mine arm be broken from the bone."

"Who said that?" demanded Mrs Bartholomew.

"Job."

"I don't see what he has to do with us," said the lady, moving her rosetted slipper impatiently, and so making a soft little rustle with the lilac ruffles of her silk skirt.

"The old fellow had no business to swear, anyhow," said Norton.

"Swear!" said Judy.

"Something very like it," said Norton.

"Go on, Matilda," said Mrs Lloyd,—"if you have anything more."

"Yes, grandmamma."

"What is David trying to prove?" asked Mrs Laval.

"We are only trying to find out what the word of the Lord would make us do, Aunt Zara."

The two younger ladies looked annoyed ; however, silence was restored, and Matilda began again.

"He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth ; but he that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he."

"Do we despise anybody ?" Mrs Bartholomew asked. No one answered at first. "I do," said Judy. "Just two or three."

"He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord ; and that which he hath given will He pay him again."

"You see," said David, "the Lord reckons it His own affair. These are Messiah's poor people ; we are His stewards."

"How much are you going to give them on that principle ?" his mother inquired.

"I don't know, mamma."

"But speak !" she said impatiently. "You *do* know what you mean to do ; you have it all mapped out already in your head, I know."

"I don't know how much I shall give, mamma. Whatever I think they want more than I do."

"You might wear homespun, and eat bread and water, at that rate."

"Mamma," said Judy, "we are very wicked to wear silk dresses. And just think of your lace shawl, mamma ! And grandma's."

Matilda waited, and when nobody carried on the talk, and the silence waited for her, she went on with Isaiah's beautiful words.

"Is not this the fast that I have chosen ? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke ? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house ? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him ; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh ?"

"What is 'loosing the bands of wickedness ?'" asked Mrs Lloyd.

"Now-a-days, grandmamma, I should say it was breaking

up the killing rents and starving wages, and the whole system of tenement houses—for one thing."

"Why, what do you know about it, Davy, boy?"

"Not very much, ma'am; but I have seen a little, and the doctor I went for told me a good deal."

"Davy's growing elegant in his speech, as well as modest," said his sister. "He has 'heard a good deal,' but he 'don't know much.' O Davy, why don't you make better use of your opportunities?"

"Very unprofitable opportunities, I must say," remarked his mother. "I have no idea that such a boy has any business with them, or anything to do in such places. And what does he know about wages and systems of business?"

"Go on, Matilda," said Mrs Lloyd. "I am afraid, my dear, David is right. I have heard the same things from others. Go on, Matilda."

"Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be compensated at the resurrection of the just."

Matilda read these words with a quick remembrance of the time when she had read them in the company of her two little school-mates, and the discussion that had ensued thereupon; curious what their reception would be. It was stormy.

"The idea!" said Mrs Bartholomew.

"That would make a finish of society at once," said Mrs Laval.

"But what do the words mean?" asked Mrs Lloyd. "There they are. They must mean something."

"Something!" echoed Mrs Bartholomew, "just imagine, that we are to gather in a company of cripples round our dinner table! Send out and ask all the forlorn creatures

we can find, and feed them on game and sweetbreads. It looks like it!"

"And give up entertaining our friends," added Mrs Laval.

"What friends do we entertain, Aunt Zara?" David asked. "You do not care for most of them."

"You are a ridiculous, absurd, fanatical boy!" said Judy. "What nonsense you do talk."

"Nonsense that would make an end of all civilisation," said Mrs Laval, not quite logically.

"But do you care much for these people you invite?" David persisted.

"Not singly," Mrs Laval admitted; "but taken together, I care a great deal. At least they are people of our own rank and standing in society, and we can understand what they talk about."

"But what do the words mean?" Mrs Lloyd asked.

"Why, mother," said Mrs Bartholomew, "you have read them a thousand times. They mean what they always did."

"I don't think I ever raised the question till this minute," said Mrs Lloyd. "In fact, I don't think I knew the words were there. And I should like to know now what they mean."

"Grandmother," said David, "isn't it safe to conclude they mean just what they say?"

"Then we should never ask anybody to dinner!" cried his mother.

"And we should never have a party again," said Judy.

"Society would be at an end," said Mrs Laval.

"And we should fill our house with horrid wretches," cried Judy, "and have to take up our carpets and clean house every time."

David was silent while these various charges were eagerly poured out. Norton looked at him a little scornfully, Matilda anxiously; but he was only sorrowfully quiet till his grandmother turned to him with her question.

"What would you do, Davy?"

"He'd do anything absurd and ridiculous," said Judy ; "the more the better. He is just fit for it. What's the use of asking him, grandma ?"

"I would like to hear, my dear, if you will let him speak. I would like to know what the words say to you, Davy."

"Grandmother," said David, thoughtfully, "it seems to me the words forbid that we should ask people just that they may ask us ;—or do anything of that sort."

"But society would fall to pieces," said Mrs Bartholomew.

"I never heard of the strictest Christians refusing to do polite things in that way, when they can," added Mrs Laval.

"But what do the words say ?" David answered. "And then, I think, the Lord meant to forbid our making expensive entertainments for anybody, *except* those who can't give us the same again."

"Then we may ask our friends," said Judy, "only we mustn't give them anything to eat ; and of course no wine to drink. I wonder if we might light the gas ? It is expensive, when you burn enough of it. Such meanness !" exclaimed Judy, with concentrated scorn.

"You would put an end to society," repeated Mrs Laval.

"What would be the use of having a fine house and large rooms and beautiful things," asked her sister, "if nobody was to see them ?"

David cast his eyes round the room where they were, and smiled a little.

"What *do* you mean ?" asked his mother, sharply.

"I was thinking, mamma," said David ; "I couldn't help thinking."

"Go on, David," Mrs Lloyd said.

"Well, grandmamma, if one took the money to give poor people a good time, it would not be necessary at all, as Judy supposed, to have them brought into our dining-room."

"But don't you think people are meant to be sociable, and see their friends ? We are not intended to live alone."

"Surely not," said Mrs Laval.

"Grandmamma, and Aunt Zara," said the boy, "I believe I would like to look after Messiah's friends first ; and then do what I pleased with my own."

"Do you mean that all those low, miserable people are His friends ?" cried Mrs Bartholomew.

"He is their friend, mamma ; it comes to the same thing ; and some of them are His very own ; and He has given us the charge to take care of them. And His words seem to me very plain."

"He's a ruined boy, mamma," said Judy.

"I hope he'll grow out of it," said his mother.

"May I read one place more, grandmamma ?" Matilda asked.

"I hope it's the last," said Mrs Bartholomew.

"I like to hear them," said Mrs Loyd. "Read, Matilda." Matilda read, her voice trembling a little :

"Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world ; for I was a hungered, and ye gave me meat ; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink ; I was a stranger, and ye took me in ; naked, and ye clothed me ; I was sick, and ye visited me ; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we Thee a hungered and fed Thee ? or thirsty, and gave Thee drink ? When saw we Thee a stranger, and took Thee in ? or naked, and clothed Thee ? or when saw we Thee sick, or in prison, and came unto Thee ?

"And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

There was no remark made by anybody following upon this reading. The circle broke up. With dissatisfied faces the ladies and Judy and Norton withdrew their several ways. David presently went off too, but Matilda had noticed that his face was as serene as summer moonlight.

She was gathering up her books to go too like all the rest, when to her great surprise Mrs Lloyd came beside her and drawing her into her arms bestowed an earnest kiss upon her uplifted wondering face. Then they both went silently up-stairs.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE peace of the house was gone. Not, indeed, that quarrelling took its place ; there was no quarrelling ; only an uncomfortable feeling in the air, and looks that were no longer pleased and pleasant. Mrs Bartholomew wore a discontented face, and behaved so. Judy was snappish, not a new thing exactly, but it was invariable now. David was very quiet and very sober ; however, in his case the quiet *was* quiet, and the soberness was very serene ; all the old gloom seemed to be gone. Norton, Matilda thought, was cross ; and she failed to see the occasion. Even Mrs Laval looked uncomfortable sometimes, and once remarked to Matilda that it would be pleasant to get back to Shadywalk. And Matilda loved Shadywalk and Briery Bank, but she was not ready with a response. She tried to be very busy with her studies, and hoped that things would work clear by and by. Once she had the curiosity to ask Norton how David was getting on at school ?

"Well enough," Norton answered shortly.

"Do the boys like him better ?"

"Better than what ?"

"Why, better than they used to ?"

"I don't know. I don't."

"Why not, Norton ? Oh, why don't you ?"

"No accounting for tastes," Norton replied, rather grumly.

"Does David study well ?"

"Yea. He always did."

Norton might have said that David was walking into everything and through everything ; but he did not say anything of the kind. And sundry other questions that

trembled on the tip of Matilda's tongue—only trembled there, and never got any further.

Meanwhile Mrs Binn was not forgotten.

"It's worth anything," David said to Matilda one day that week, "to see the fellow eat strawberries."

"Strawberries! Oh, did you take strawberries to him?" cried Matilda. "And he liked them?"

"You could almost see the red of the strawberries getting up into his cheeks. He's not quite so far as that, though. Like them! He raised himself half up and lay on his elbow to eat them. Think of that! You should have seen the fellow. Spoons were no go. He just forked them in with his fingers."

"Does he lie in the entry yet, David?"

"No. His mother has got him into her bit of a room, and the wash-tub is where he was. I do think we might get him into the country next week, if there was any place he could go to. He's like another boy, with a bed under him and clean things and food that he can eat. I do believe he was starving to death. Sick folks can't get along on dry crusts, or even mush—plain, without butter or molasses," said David, smiling.

"David, I have thought of something."

"What is it? Something to help us out of the difficulty?"

"I don't know. See what you think. You heard Miss Redwood and me talking of Lilac Lane, and people that live in it?"

"I heard nothing of Lilac Lane; never did, till this minute."

"Oh, you were in the study with Mr Richmond. It is a place in Shadywalk, where some very poor people live."

"Well?" said David.

"But it is a delightful place compared to Mrs Binn's tenement house. I know some of the people there, and Miss Redwood knows more; and I was thinking, perhaps, she could find a house where they would take Josh in and take care of him till he gets well. Miss Redwood could see to him a little, you know."

"Why, it's a capital idea, Tilly!" cried David. "Did you write and ask her?"

"No; but I will."

"Do, to-day. That's just what he wants. Write, Tilly. I must be off to my work."

Nothing stopped David's work, in these days; indeed, he never had been given to playing truant. Matilda pondered the matter a little, and then wrote a letter to Miss Redwood; upon which letter, when it reached Shadywalk, the housekeeper and the minister held consultation. The end was, that after a week Matilda got an answer which said that the poor family opposite Matilda's old Sally in Lilac Lane, the same from whom she had borrowed the tea-kettle once upon a time, had room to spare and would gladly take the sick child in and take care of him, for the compensation which would be offered. Miss Redwood also engaged herself to see that proper care was had and proper food given; and, in short, the way was clear.

"That will do," said David, when he had read the letter.

"Now, the thing is to get him up there."

"Is Mrs Binn willing?"

"She is one of the willingest persons you ever saw in your life."

"Well, how will you manage, David?"

"I don't see any way but to go myself."

"Go up to Shadywalk, you mean, to take the child there?"

"Yes."

"O David, would you? And could you?"

"I don't see any other way."

"But school? will you miss a day?"

"Can't do that; and can't even give Saturday, so near the end of term. I'll manage it."

"How, David?"

"Go up after school some day, and take a night train down."

"Is Josh—I mean, has he any clothes fit to travel in?"

"He has not any fit to sit up in at home. Never mind, I'll manage that, Tilly."

"David, you tell me some of the things he wants, and I'll get Sarah Staples and her mother to make them."

"Well—But I'll pay charges, Tilly ; I don't believe you've got much in that little pocket of yours."

This consultation was private ; and in private the new clothes for Joshua Binn were procured and got ready—very plain and coarse clothes, for David and Matilda were learning how much there was to do with their money. All this caused no remark, not being open to it. But when David took little Josh, wrapped up in an old cloak of his, and drove with him in a carriage to the station, and took the cars with him to Shadywalk, there was a general outcry and burst of astonishment and indignation. David was at breakfast the next morning as usual ; and the storm fell upon him.

"I wonder how you feel this morning," said his grandmother, half in displeasure and half in sympathy, for David was a favourite.

"After travelling all night," added Mrs Laval.

"Up to study, Davy ?" asked Norton.

"I am so astonished at you, David, that I do not know how to speak," began his mother. "You—always until now a refined, gentlemanly boy—you to turn yourself into a head hospital nurse, and Poor Society agent ! travelling in company with the lowest riff-raff ! I don't know what to make of you. Really, I am in despair."

"He always was a poke," said Judy ; "and now he's a poor poke."

"It is too bad !" echoed Mrs Laval ; "though *that* isn't true, Judy."

"He's a spoiled boy," said Judy. "I wash my hands of him. I hope he'll wash *his* hands."

"The idea !" said Mrs Bartholomew. "As if there was nobody else in the world to look after sick children, but Davy must leave his own business and go nursing them in the cars ! I wouldn't have had anybody see him for a thousand dollars."

"What harm, mamma ?" asked David, coolly.

"Harm!" repeated Mrs Bartholomew. "Is it *your* business to take all sick New York and all poor New York on your hands, and send them to watering-places?"

"One poor little child!" said David.

"No matter; what's the use of sending one, if you don't send the other hundred thousand? Is it *your* business, David Bartholomew?"

"Hardly, mamma. But I thought the one was my business."

"There you were mistaken. There are two or three poor societies; it is for them to look after these cases. What is the use of having poor societies, if we are to do the work ourselves? So low! so undignified! so degrading! just ask any minister—ask Dr Blandford—what he thinks."

"David don't care, mamma," said Judy. "David never cares what anybody thinks."

"Very wrong, then," said Mrs Bartholomew; "every right-feeling person cares what other people think. How is the world to get along? David, I don't know you any more; you are so changed."

"Yes, mamma," said David; "perhaps I am."

"Perhaps you are? Why, my patience!"—

"Your patience seems to have given out, daughter," said Mrs Lloyd. "Come, let Davy eat his breakfast."

"He's eating it," said Judy. "Nothing will hurt David's appetite."

"I should think nursing poor folks out of tenement houses might," observed Mrs Bartholomew. "It would once."

"I can't imagine, mamma," said Judy, "how we are going to live together in future. David isn't our sort any more. Life looks dark to me."

"If it was anybody but David," said Mrs Bartholomew, "I should say he would grow out of it. Any other young fool would."

"Grow out of what, mamma?" David asked.

"Grow out of the notion of being an agent of the poor societies. It's too disgusting!"

"Mamma," he said, and he said it with such an unruffled

face, that Matilda was comforted, "the poor society would not have done what I did last night. And I am not doing it for the poor societies, but for the King Messiah. I am His agent ; that's all."

"Where did you get your commission ?" Norton asked.

David hesitated, and then said, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you"—

"But that's absolute nonsense !" exclaimed Mrs Bartholomew.

"What, mamma ?" said David, lifting his eyes to her face.

"I mean, of course, the words are not nonsense, but putting such a meaning to them."

"What meaning do you think belongs to them, then, mamma ?"

"Why," said Mrs Bartholomew, in high dudgeon, "if you are to take them so, then we ought to send our carriage to take poor people to drive, and we ought to give our grapes and our wine to unwell people, instead of eating them ourselves ; and I ought to sell my diamonds and change them into bread and coffee and feather beds, I suppose ; and our silks and laces ought to go for rents and firing for those who are in want."

"Well, mother ?" said David.

"Well ; is *that* what you mean ?"

"That's what the words mean, if they mean anything, mamma. I think the King wants all we have got, to be used in His work ; and all mine He shall have."

There was no braggadocio, but a sweet steadfastness in the words and manner which impressed all his hearers, though it impressed them differently.

"Mother, what do you think of him ?" Mrs Bartholomew said, apparently in despair.

"I don't know what to think, child," said the old lady. "I am puzzled."

"About me, grandmamma ?" asked David.

"No, boy ; I never was puzzled about you, and I am not now."

"We'll have grandma going over next!" exclaimed Judy, "and then—what 'll be then, mamma? Will this be an hospital, grandmamma? I shouldn't like to live here in that case, because of the fevers. I declare I'm very sorry! Will David be the doctor or the minister, grandmamma?"

"Hush, Judy!" said her mother. "Things are bad enough without you."

"There's one thing, you vexatious boy," said Judy; "your uncles will give you up."

"They have done that already," said David, quietly.

"Have they? Oh, have they really, mamma? Then they won't give him their money when they die! nor me neither. You hateful fellow! to go and make *me* poor as well as yourself." And Judy began to cry. "I thought we'd be so rich, mamma!"

"Do hold your tongue, Judy," said her mother. "You've got enough, and David much more than enough."

But with this the uncomfortable breakfast-party broke up.

"Matilda," said Mrs Laval, when they had gone up-stairs, "I don't know whether you have done good or harm."

"She's done no good, mamma," said Norton. "Just look at Davy. And I can tell you, grandmamma is beginning to read the Bible to herself; I've seen her at it."

"But I haven't done anything, mamma," said Matilda.

"Well, my dear, I don't know who has, then," Mrs Laval replied.

And the subject was dropped. But certainly Mrs Lloyd did begin after that to ask Matilda now and then, when they were alone, to read to her; and Matilda found that David did it constantly, by his grandmother's desire, in her own room.

The weeks were few now to the time when the household would break up; Mrs Laval and her children to return to Briery Bank, Mrs Bartholomew and hers for a cottage at Newport. Mrs Lloyd was accustomed to abide generally with the latter. All the members of the family were busied with their various preparations; and the unsettled feeling of coming change was upon the whole household. Little

else was thought of. So when an invitation came from the mother of Esther Francis, that all the young ones should join a party of pleasure that were going to spend the day in Westchester, it was a very unlooked-for variety in the general course of things. Of course they would go. The young people were to eat strawberries and do everything else that was pleasant, at General Francis's place. Mrs Francis was not yet ready to leave town ; there was nobody in possession but the servants ; the widest liberty would be the rule of the day.

"How nice that the boys are out of school!" said Matilda.
"Term just ended."

"Of course. Couldn't have the party without the people," said Judy.

"Will there be a great many, Norton?" Matilda asked.

"Don't know anything about it. You must ask somebody else. Esther Francis isn't *our* cousin."

"How dry you are," said David. "I know no more about it, Matilda, than he does."

"Esther said there would be twenty or thirty," said Judy.
"How are we going ? that's what I want to know."

"Take the Harlem railroad to the station," said Norton, "and drive the rest. That's the way you always go to General Francis's. Mamma! I'd like to drive Pink out. It's only thirteen miles."

"I'm afraid, Norton. I think you had better all go together."

Norton grumbled a little ; however, it was good enough even so.

The day was the first of June ; fresh and sweet as the first of June should be. The four were in the cars early ; and as soon as the train had got quit of the city, the sights and smells of the country roused Matilda to the highest pitch of delight. Such green fields ! such blue sky ! such delicious air ! and such varieties of pleasant objects that she had not seen for some time. The rush to the station was one whirl of pleasure ; then the pleasure grew greater, for they got into a carriage to drive across the country. Every

foot of the way, though it was not through a very enchanting landscape, was joyous to Matilda's vision ; and when the grounds were reached of General Francis's villa, there was nothing more left in this world to desire. For there were plantations of trees, extending far and wide, with roads and paths cut through them, over which the young fresh foliage cast the sweetest of shadow. There were meadows, broad and fair, green and smooth, with a little river winding along in them, and scattered trees here and there for shade, and fringes of willows and alders to the sides of the stream. And at a little distance stood the large old house, with groves of trees encircling it, and lawns before and on one side of it ; and on the side lawn, in the edge of the grove, long tables set and spread with damask.

"Dinner already ?" queried Norton. "I am hungry enough."

"Dinner at ten o'clock!" cried Judy. Breakfast, you mean."

"Esther, is it breakfast ?" asked Norton, as their little hostess came to them.

"It is what you like, Mr Laval," said the little lady, whose pink bows were not more in style than her manners.

"Norton is hungry, Esther," David remarked.

"I hope you are, too."

"What are you going to give us, Esther ?" said Judy, eagerly. "We are all like bears. Strawberries ?"

"We must wait for another carriage. The Grandsons are coming."

"I wouldn't wait," said Judy. "What's the use ? Ten o'clock is late enough for breakfast."

"But we shall not have the collation till three."

"What have you got for breakfast ?"

"Coffee."

"And strawberries ?"

"Haven't you had any strawberries this year ?"

"Lots, but not in the country, you know, where they grow."

"And not with such yellow cream as we have got from our dairy."

"Will you have cream enough for all, Esther?" David asked, as, coming round the house, they saw a small crowd of young people collected near the tables. Esther smiled and bridled, and then there was no more private talk, but a whole chorus of greetings and questions and answers. And then another carriage drew up, with the missing Grandsons; and the party went to breakfast.

It seemed to Matilda that to eat under the shadow of trees, and on the carpet of grass, and with the music of leaves and insects and breezes, was the very most delightful thing that could be invented. She was very hungry, no doubt; and Mrs Francis's excellent cook had made capital provision for her young mistress; but besides all that, how pretty it was! The light flickered through the oak leaves upon the white tablecloths, and gleamed from china and glass and silver in the most cheery way; it gleamed upon the little river too and upon the blades of grass on the lawn. Out there the sunshine was full; the eye went across to the scattered trees and to the further woods on the other side; a great promising playground it looked. And then the air was so sweet and fresh. Matilda was not seated very well for her pleasure; nobody near that she knew very well; nevertheless, she eat her strawberries and cream and devoured rolls and butter with a contented appreciation of what she had, and an amused observation of what was around her.

How were they to spend the day?

This question received earnest attention as soon as the business of breakfast was off their hands.

"Day is pretty well gone already," said Norton, consulting his watch. "It is twelve o'clock. There is not time for anything else but to have dinner and go home."

"We do not dine till four o'clock," Esther announced.

"Four hours," said somebody. "Time enough to get hungry again. I'll take anybody that wants to go a row on the river; if somebody'll help me row."

"Everybody do what everybody likes until three o'clock,"

said Esther. "Suppose then, at three o'clock, we all gather in the pavilion and have games?"

Unanimous acceptance of this proposal. Then a flutter and division and scattering of the little crowd.

Matilda wondered what *she* would do or be asked to do. She would have liked the sail on the Bronx; but so would a good many more. The little boat was very soon filled with the eager applicants, and David volunteered to help row it. One of Matilda's friends was thus removed from her. She turned to look for Norton. He was not to be seen. A general stampede of the boys to the stables made it supposable that he was in the midst of the gay little group rushing that way. Matilda looked around her. The tables were deserted; the little boat had disappeared up the stream; all the boys were gone; and one or two groups of girls, unknown to her, were loitering over the grass towards the house. A flush of vexation and embarrassment came over Matilda. Was this civility? and what was she to do with herself for three hours to come? And how disagreeable, to be regarded as of no consequence and no concern to anybody. Tears swelled in their fountains, but Matilda was not going to cry. She would not linger alone by the tables, she did not know her way in the house, and besides would not seek those who should properly seek her; she turned her steps to the little river. The flowing water had a great charm for her; the bank was smooth and green; she wandered along till she came to what she called a nice place, where a young willow hung over and dipped its long branches in, and the bank offered a soft shady seat. Matilda sat down, and felt very lonely. But glimpses taken through the trees and shrubbery showed her nobody near or far, except the servants; and Matilda resolved to be quiet and wait for better things by and by. She looked at her watch; it was half-past twelve. I am bound to confess it was a good half hour more before Matilda could get the better of a desperate fit of disappointment and vexation. She had not counted upon spending her holiday in this manner; and slights and unkindness are pleasant to no-

body. There is something in use, however, and more in a quiet mind. The little girl's roiled feelings at last ran clear again ; and she began to enjoy things after her own fashion.

The ripple and flow of that water was certainly delicious ; it made one cool only to hear it. She could get down to the brink too and cautiously dip her hand in. There were little fishes in a shallow there ; their play and movement were very amusing, and Matilda went into deep speculation about how much they knew, and what they felt, and what their manner of life amounted to, and how they probably regarded the strange creature looking down at them. Very much she wondered what they could eat to live upon. The water plants that grew along the stream had Matilda's attention too, and the mosses that covered the stones. And one or two grasshoppers finally proved a great source of entertainment. She quite forgot to feel lonely, and was taking her enjoyment in a very harmonious way ; when she heard a different swash of the water and the dip of oars, and the boat shot round a curve and came down the stream. She watched it, wondering whether its crew would see her, Just opposite her willow the oars stopped.

"Is that you, Tilly ?" David cried.

A small "yes" came from the bank.

"What are you doing there ?"

"Oh, amusing myself."

"Where is everybody else ?"

"I don't know."

"Where's Norton ?"

"I don't know. I think he went to see the horses."

"Come down to the landing," said David after a moment's pause.

Matilda nodded, and the boat shot forward again. It had turns to take following the course of the stream ; while she on the land could cut across points, and she reached the landing place the first.

The little parted landed with cries of pleasure, and the next thing, set off on a run for the house. David purposely

hung back, so that he and Matilda in a few minutes were behind all the others.

"Where is everybody?" inquired David.

"I don't know."

"What have you been doing all this while?"

"It was very pretty down by the water, David. I didn't mind;—at least, not after the first. It was very pleasant there."

"All alone?"

"Yes; except the fishes and the grasshoppers."

"Well; I shall cut out the fishes now."

David kept his word. A deputation of the boys met them and begged him to go where the others were riding. David went but kept hold of Matilda's hand, though warned that "the girls" were finding other amusements in the house. Matilda was taken into the meadow where the boys and the horses were congregated; a safe seat was found for her on the wall from whence she could survey the whole field; and though David took his share in the amusements that followed, riding and racing with the other boys, he never let her feel herself forgotten or alone; stopping his horse every now and then in front of her to say something and find out if she was happy. Matilda was very happy, greatly amused, and intensely pleased that David had constituted himself her protector. The hours sped along; the soft June sun was never too hot; the little white clouds that crossed the sky cast shadows not needed for the busy pleasure seekers, nor even for the quiet spectator. At last Matilda heard a shout behind her.

CHAPTER XV.

"**W**HAT *are* you doing, you boyish girl?"

"It was Judy, at the head of the whole bevy of young ones from the house.

"I didn't know what had become of you, Matilda," said Esther.

"Come down!" said Judy. "What business have you there? Who asked you to watch the boys? Why don't you come down? On the wall, too! Esther didn't invite you there."

"Esther didn't invite me anywhere," said Matilda, with the old inevitable set of her head, which said much more than the little girl knew. Esther felt it, and Judy was incensed.

"I *would* be ashamed, if I were you," she said. "Tell the boys, will you, that we are ready for the games. Call somebody. Shout! now you are up there, make yourself useful."

Matilda preferred not to shout. Instead of that, she waved her handkerchief. David rode up, the message was given. Then Norton came to help Matilda down from the wall; and soon the whole party gathered in the pavilion. This was rather more than a summer-house; a large saloon, with windows and glass doors on all sides, furnished with lounges and easy chairs and tables, with a carpet on the floor, and kept with all the nicety of the house itself. Warm, and tired, and happy, the little company was ready for quiet amusements; and they played games of various kinds until the gong called them to dinner. That was to have been the end of the day's entertainment; but a storm had come up while they were at the table, and the rain fell too abundantly to let anybody leave the house except those who could go in close carriages. A few were thus drafted

off belonging to neighbouring families ; a goodly little company still remained, who were forced to accept the house-keeper's hospitalities for the night. That was additional fun rather than inconvenience, so voted and so accepted. However, as the day began to close in and a lull fell upon all their pleasure-seeking, it began to appear that the little people were tired. Naturally, they had worked hard all day. Voices changed their tone.

"Oh dear ! I wish it wouldn't rain !" cried one young lady, pressing her face against the window, down the outside of which the streams of rain-drops were running fast.

"Might as well wish something else, Carrie, while you are about it," Norton said.

"I can't!"

"I wish I was home," said another.

"Wait till to-morrow, and you will have your wish."

"But I don't want to wait."

"Don't you know some new games, Esther?"

This sort of thing went on for some time till tea and cake made a diversion, and lights were brought. Then the cry was, "What shall we do all the rest of the evening ?"

"I have a game for you," said David at last.

"What is it ? what is it ?"

"A new game."

"What is it ?"

"It is called 'Capital and Interest.'"

"I don't understand that," pouted one of the young ladies.

"You will understand it fast enough, when we come to play it."

"How do you play it ?"

"You must choose a judge and a recorder."

"What's a recorder ?"

"Some one to put down what we say. We all tell our business ; the recorder sets it down, and the judge says whose business is worth the most."

"How can he tell ?"

"He can hear what we say, and he can use his judgment, as we all can."

"Must we tell the truth, or say what we have a mind ?"

"Either you like."

"That's jolly!" said one of the boys. "I go in for saying what we have a mind."

"Just imagine the nicest things you can," David went on.

"To eat ?" said Esther.

"No, no ; you've done enough of that to-day," said Norton. "Imagine what you have a mind to—every sort of thing that's pleasant."

"Well, you begin, Norton, because you understand it. We'll hear you play, and so learn."

"We have got to choose the judge first. And the recorder."

"What's the judge to do ?"

"Say who has made the best business."

"I don't understand a bit of it," said Esther.

"No ; but you will presently. You'll see. Wait till we begin. Who will you have for Judge ?"

There was a general cry of "David Bartholomew!"

"No," said David, "I won't be judge. I'll be recorder, if you like. For judge, I propose Norton Laval."

Norton was agreed upon unanimously.

"Now we are ready. Esther, we will begin at you. Tell what you have, or what you would like to have ; and then what you would do with it, or use it for."

"I don't know what you mean," said Esther.

"You are not tied to facts. Tell what you like. What would you most like ?"

"Most like ?" repeated Esther. "Let me see. It's very hard to begin with me, when I don't know the game. Let us see. I think I should like to have the most beautiful diamonds in New York."

"Very good," said Norton. "Now tell what you would do with them."

"Do with them ? Why, wear them, of course."

"Of course," said Norton. "But the diamonds are your capital, you understand; what interest will you get for your capital? What *good* will they do you, Esther? that's it."

"What *good*?" said Esther. "Why, if I had the finest jewels of anybody, don't you see I should outshine everybody."

"I don't see it," said Norton; "but then I'm not in that line. It's *your* business we are talking of. Put it down properly, Recorder. Now Bob Francis—what's your idea of a jolly life, eh?"

"I don't know!" said Bob. He was a year older than his sister; not a year brighter.

"Oh yes, you do. Fancy—but I don't believe you *can* fancy—what would you like best, Bob?—come!"

"I'd like as well as anything to be a cavalry officer, and have nothing to do but ride."

"A cavalry officer has a great deal to do, I can tell you, my fine fellow, besides riding," said David.

"Oh, well; I don't want to have anything else to do," said Bob. "I'd cut school, it's a bore."

"But you *can't* ride always. What will be the good of your riding when you are unwell, or get old?"

"Oh, then I'll die," said Bob, contentedly.

"Let it stand, Davy," said Norton. "Write him down, with a horse and a saddle for his capital, and riding his business. Who's next? Hatty Delaplaine! What *will* you have?"

Hatty, a pale, freckled girl, with twinkling grey eyes, was ready with her answer.

"I'd like to have Stewart's store, all to myself, and a dressmaker."

"The dressmaker all to yourself too, I suppose. Girls are the queerest things!" said Norton.

"Not a bit queerer than boys," spoke up Judy.

"Well—see if the present game does not prove them so," said Norton. "What'll you do with Stewart's and a dressmaker, Hatty Delaplaine?"

"Don't you see? I'd never wear the same dress twice,

and I wouldn't have the same for breakfast or luncheon or dinner ; and I would have the most beautiful dresses that ever were seen."

"What would you do with them, after once wearing ?" David asked.

"Oh, I should never know and never care. My maid would dispose of them, I suppose. I should have enough to do to think of the new ones. But I *do* love costumes !" the girl added, clasping her hands.

"Is that a 'costume' you have got on ?" Norton asked.

"Nonsense ! it isn't anything. I haven't got Stewart's and my dressmaker yet. When I have, you'll know it."

"Juliet Bracebridge !—speak, if you please. I'm finished," said Norton. "This is the richest game I've seen yet, Juliet!"

"I think I should like a perfect little carriage, and a perfect pair of horses, and to go driving over the world."

"Where ?" said Norton. "You mean, over the Central Park and the Boulevards."

"No, I don't. I mean what I say."

"Bad roads in some places," said Norton. "Up Vesuvius, for instance ; or over Mont Blanc in winter. Greece is dangerous, and"—

"Don't talk nonsense, Norton Laval. Of course, I should drive where I could drive, and would like to drive. Over Mont Blanc in winter, indeed !"

"Well, come to business. A perfect pair of horses and perfect carriage,—that's your capital ; and you'll go driving all over. What will be the interest on your capital, do you think ? in other words, what will you take by it ?"

"I should always have a variety, don't you see, and not have time to get tired of anything."

"Are there roads enough in the world to last you ?" said Norton. "I declare ! these girls—Joe Benton, give us your mind."

"I'll make a fortune, Norton."

"All right. What'll you do with it ?"

"I'll have the best house, and the handsomest wife, and the largest estate in the country."

"You'll buy your wife with your money?" asked Judy.

"Easy," said Joe, grinning.

"I don't care—'twont be *me*," said Judy. "I pity the woman."

"Why?" said Joe. "She'll have everything she wants, too."

"Excepting the right person," said Judy.

"Well, I don't care; it *won't* be you," said Joe; "so you may say what you like."

"I would if it was," said Judy.

But a chorus of laughter broke them off.

"Judy's next," said Norton. I should like to hear what you will say, Judy."

"I should like to be a queen," said Judy.

"That's it! Go to the top at once. Well, you've got to show why. What would you do if you were a queen?"

"I'd put down all preaching and praying, and people's making fools of themselves with giving away their money to poor folks, and nursing sick folks, and all the rest of it."

"Why, Judy!" exclaimed one or two. "You'd stop preaching?"

"Wouldn't you be sorry?" said Judy.

"No, but really. Wouldn't you let people be ministers?"

"Ministers like Dr Blandford. He don't give away his money, I'll be bound; and he likes his glass of wine and smokes his pipe like other folks."

"He don't smoke a *pipe*, Judy."

"You know what I mean. If I had said he likes his *grog*, you wouldn't have thought it was made of gin, would you?"

"So you'd be a queen, to stop religious toleration?" said Norton.

"I'd stop *any*," said Judy. "I don't care whether it's religious or not."

"But what's given you such a spite at religious people?" asked Esther.

"Mean!" said Judy. "Artful. Conceited to death. Stupid. And insane."

There was again a chorus of "Oh, Judy's!"

"Never mind," said Norton. "When she's queen, I'll sell out and buy an estate in some other country. Who's next?"

"I knew you'd be sneaking along presently, at the tail of some black coat or other," Judy responded. "It's in you. The disease'll break out."

"I don't know what's in me," said Norton. "Something that makes me hot. I'm afraid it isn't religious. Roswell Holt, what's your idea of capital and business? Do leave Judy to her own fancies. This game's getting to be warm work. Roswell!—it's your turn."

"I believe," Roswell began sedately; he was an older boy than most of them and very quiet; "I believe, what I should like would be, to know all the languages there are in the world; and then to have a library so large that all the books in the world should be in it."

"Capital!" said Norton. "What good would that do you?"

"Why, I could read everything," said Roswell.

"And what good would *that* do you?"

"I should like it," said Roswell. "I should have what I like."

"Solomon tried that once," said David, who was taking diligently his reporter's notes. "It didn't seem to answer then."

"Ah, but there were not so many books in his day," said Roswell.

"The worse for you, I should say. Besides, there are not so many now as there will be a thousand years hence. How about that, old fellow?"

"I can't read what there'll be a thousand years hence," said Roswell.

"You couldn't read what there are now, if you had them. You could not live long enough."

"What a musty old fogey he would be, by the time he had

gone half through!" said Judy. "He would have used up his eyes; his spectacles would have made a ridge on his nose; he would live in an old coat that was never brushed; and his books would be all coffee stains, because he would take his breakfast over them. Poor old creature!"

"You'll be old then yourself, Judy," said some one.

"I won't," said the young lady, promptly. "I mean to keep young."

"Ben Johnson—go ahead," said Norton. "It's your turn."

"I'd like to go supercargo in the China trade," said Ben; a lively-looking fellow enough.

"Good," said Norton. "Say why. Love of the sea wouldn't take you to China, I suppose."

"Not exactly," said Ben, with a confidential gleam in his eyes. "I should have nothing to do—and smoke seventy cigars a day."

"Seventy cigars!" cried out two or three of the girls. "Horrid!"

"You couldn't do it, old fellow."

"Easy," said Ben. "My cousins, Will Larkins and Dan Boston, did it every day."

"They must be of a practical turn of mind, I should think," said Norton. "They meant their voyage should pay—somebody—and so concluded it should be the tobacconist. Lucy Ellis?"—

"I should like to be very beautiful," said the girl, who had some pretensions that way already, or she wouldn't have said it in public,—“and have everybody love me.”

"Everybody!" cried Judy. "All the boys, you mean."

"No, indeed," said the beauty, with a toss of her head. "I mean all the *men*."

"But people don't love people because they are handsome," said Norton.

"Don't they, though!" said Ben Johnson, who was a beauty in his way; as, indeed, so also was Norton. But here arose a furious debate of the question, in which almost everybody took part excepting David and Matilda. Laugh-

ing and shouting and discussing, the original game was almost lost sight of ; and David sat with his pen in his hand, and Matilda listened in wondering amusement, while the negative and the affirmative of the proposition were urged and argued and fought for. At last Norton appealed—

“What do you think, David ?”

“What do you think of our game ?”

“I had forgot it, that’s a fact,” said Norton. “Who’s next ? Oh, come along, we’ll never settle that question. Who’s next ? Pink, I believe it is you. Matilda Laval ! what’s your capital and business ?”

“Now, you’ll get a queer one,” said Judy.

“It won’t be the first, by some,” said Norton ; “that’s one thing.”

“This’ll be a good one. Oh, ever so good !” said Judy.

“It won’t be anything, if you can’t hush,” said Norton, impatiently. “Come, Pink, whatever it is, let us have it. What’s your fancy ?”

“I should like to have a medicine that would be sure to cure,” said Matilda.

“A medicine !” cried Norton.

“She’d be a doctor,” exclaimed Judy, with a burst of laughter.

“What for, Pink ?”

“I would go round, making sick people well.”

“Beautiful, ain’t it ?” said Judy. “Oh, we have such lots of goodness in our house, you wouldn’t know it ; and I don’t know it myself. Fact is, it confuses me.”

“Bill Langridge ?”

“Governor of the State,” called out Bill, in reply.

“Why don’t you say ‘Sultan of Muscat,’ at once ?”

“Don’t know Muscat—and don’t care about governing where I’m a stranger. Might make mistakes, you see.”

“Well—what’s the good in being Governor of the State ? —to you ?”

“Having things my own way, don’t you see ? and at top of everything.”

"There's the President, and all his secretaries," said Norton.

"They're not in my way. In the State, you know, nobody is over the Governor."

"That's what you call a moderate ambition," said David.

"Aims pretty high," said Bill.

"Not high enough," said another boy. "I'd choose to be commander-in-chief of the army."

"How's that any higher, Watson?" said Bill.

"Military rule," said Watson. "Your Governor has to consult this one and t'other one, and go by the Legislature too, when all's done; the commander-in-chief asks leave of nobody."

"Well, Elisha Peters, what's *your* ambition?" called out Norton.

"I'd like a little money,—enough, you know, not too much; and to go travelling all over the world on foot."

"On foot!" said Norton. "What would you get out of that?"

"I should see everything. Not part, you know, as everybody does; should see everything."

"What would you do, Elisha, when you had got to the end of everything?—seen it all?"

"Don't believe I could. The world's big enough to last one man."

"Don't know but what it is," said Norton. "Will you write a book?"

"Guess not. Take too much time."

"Then the travelling would do nobody good but *you*?" said David.

"Who else should it?" replied Elisha.

"The *book* would do nobody any good, if he were to write it," suggested Judy.

"Polite," said Elisha.

"Selfish," retorted Judy.

"Everybody is selfish," retorted the young cynic.

"Tain't true," said Norton; "but I haven't time to argue just now. I've got work enough to do as a judge. Are we

most through ? I declare, here's half a dozen more to speak. Speak quick, please, and don't say so many odd things. The judge's work isn't going to be a trifle, in this court. Dick Morton, go ahead."

"I'd like to be able to do just what I have a mind to," said Dick.

"Bravo ! only that's what we're all after. Come a little nearer the p'int, Dick ; what'll you do with your time ?"

"I'd be a hunter. I'd have first-rate rifles, you know, and pistols, and all that ; and people to help ; and I'd just go hunting. I'd kill buffaloes in the West till I had enough of that, and take a turn at a bear or so ; then I'd go to Africa, and have a royal time with the rhinoceros and lions, and maybe crocodiles. I'd spend a good while in Africa. Elephants, too. Then I'd cross over to India, and hunt tigers. I'd chase ostriches too."

"Not in India," said David.

"I didn't say in India ; but where they are. Deer, of course, everywhere ; and chamois, and all that."

"Birds ?" suggested Norton.

"Oh yes, by the way, you know. I'd live upon ducks and snipe and wild turkey."

"When you weren't eating venison and buffalo hump," said David.

"Well, I'd have variety enough," said Dick. "I tell you ! a hunter's supper is jolly."

"All alone ?" said Esther.

"Another specimen of selfishness," said Judy. "They're all alike as two pears—only some of 'em are green, and the others a different colour."

"That's *your* business," said Norton, summing up ; "now what's the good of it, Dick ?"

"Fun. What's the good of anything ?"

"To be sure," said the judge. "Julie Simpson !"

But Julie wriggled and simpered, and could not be got to express herself otherwise. The sayings of several next coming were only echoes of some one or other of those who had spoken. Norton grew impatient.

"That'll do," he said ; "now for the recorder. It's time the judge finished up. The best part of the play comes after."

"What's that ?" said somebody ; "what comes after ? I thought this was the whole."

"You wouldn't catch me playing 'Capital and Interest' very often, if it was," said Norton. "No ; the best business man, or the one who has the best business, is to appoint forfeits to all the rest ; and if he knows how to do it, I tell you ! that's fun."

"But how are we to decide who has the best business ?"

"Can't ! The judge does that. Go ahead, David. What's *your* business ?"

"I wish it was peddling old shoes !" said Judy.

"Why ?" several asked.

"It won't be anything as respectable. We've taken to turning old coats at our house."

"Go ahead, Davy !" cried Norton.

But David was deliberate about it. He finished his writing, and looked up.

"I think my capital is *myself*," he said, with a smile. "I mean to make the most of *myself*, in every way I can think of ; as well as of my money, and whatever else I have got."

"Don't sound so bad," said Elisha, looking at Judy.

"Well, Davy," said Norton ; "what are you going to do with yourself, after you have made the most you can of it ?"

"I am the servant of the King Messiah," said David, with a smile again ; "myself and all I have belong to Him, and I want to make the most of them for Jesus and His work and His Kingdom. They are the talents He has given me to work with. And when the King comes to take account of me, I want to be able to say, 'Lord, Thy pound hath gained five pounds.'"

The little people were silent. David spoke so simply and in so business-like fashion, there was no game to be made of his words ; and nothing was said, till Norton remarked he did not know what he was going to do ; he could not remember one-half that had been said for him to pass judgment upon.

"I've got it all here," said David. "Take your seat, and begin; I'll read you two, and you choose the best in your judgment of those; then take another and compare with that, and so on."

"Well," said Norton. "Get along, David. It's a pesky business, this being judge, I can tell you."

"Silence in the court!" said David. "Esther Francis; capital, the most beautiful diamonds in New York; interest, she outshines everybody."

"Next," said Norton.

"I didn't say that, did I?" asked Esther.

"Of course, you said that; he's got it down. Next, David?"

"Bob Francis. Capital, a cavalry officer's commission and a horse. Interest, he'll ride."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed a round chorus of the children.

"Silence in the court!" repeated David. "We wait for the judge's decision."

"Hm!—I wish you had it to do!" growled Norton, rubbing his head. "Which is the best business of those two? Well, between diamonds and horses, if you're shut up to them, I think a horse is the best stock in trade."

"But the *business*—the interest," said Bob. "Ain't riding like a man better than sitting or dressing to be stared at like a woman?"

"I think it's the most manly," Norton repeated.

"But not the most womanly?" said Esther.

"No, not the most womanly."

"Well, which is *best?*" somebody cried.

"Riding is the best for me," said Norton. "I should feel like a fool in diamonds."

"A Hindoo rajah, or a Persian shah, or an Arab emir, wouldn't feel so," suggested David.

"I am not a Hindoo nor an Arab, though," said Norton. "If I am to give judgment, I'll give it like a good American. And I say, that a saddle is better than a jewel-box any day; and it's better in my judgment to ride for one's life, than to make people's eyes wink with looking at you. Go on, Recorder!"

"Hatty Delaplaine. Capital, a dressmaker and dry-goods unlimited. Interest, nothing but new dresses."

"Riding is better than dressing," said the judge. "Bob Francis has it yet."

"But why is it better?" asked Miss Hatty. The judge was a little at a loss.

"I tell you what," said he, "my business is hard enough as it is; I can't stand any aggravations. I'll take the sense of the assembly. All who say as I do, hold up their hands."

But it was found that the judgments were essentially masculine and feminine; the girls sided with Hatty, the boys with Bob.

"There's most good to be done by riding," said Norton.

"There ain't!" said Judy. "Dressing encourages the working people."

"And there's no good in riding at the head of soldiers," said Hatty.

"Well, it is a more noble occupation," said Norton.

"I don't see the nobility!" said Roswell Holt.

"Well, I don't care!" said Norton. "Let them both stand together, then. I hope there'll be something more remarkable than either of 'em."

"Juliet Bracebridge. A carriage and horses. Will drive all over the world. Thinks she'll never know ennui."

"Juliet has it," said the judge. "That's better than just riding or dressing for its own sake. I'd like driving over the world myself. What next?"

"Joe Benton. Will have a fortune. Interest, wife, house, and estate better than anybody else."

"I don't believe the best wife *can* be bought," said Roswell.

"And the best house for you mightn't be the best house for me," said Judy.

"He didn't mean it for you, Judy," said her cousin Bob.

"Judge'll never get through, if you don't stop these civilities," said Norton. "I decide for Joe. No, I don't! I decide for Juliet. Nicer to go contentedly travelling all

over, than to take all one's comfort in one's pride. Juliet has it yet."

"Judy Bartholomew. Will have a queen's power, and the use of it is to put down religious freedom in her dominions."

"Juliet has it!" shouted Norton. "Better amuse yourself *not* at other people's expense, I think, if you can manage it."

"Roswell Holt, all books in all languages, and power to understand them. Finds the good of his life in reading."

"That sounds sensible," said Norton. "I give it for Roswell over Juliet."

"But why?" urged Juliet.

"There's something in books, you see."

"I am sure there is a good deal in countries, and cities, and people."

"True," said Norton.

"How's his business better than mine?"

"I don't know. Seems as if it ought to be."

"He pleases himself one way, and I another."

"And I another," said Esther.

"True. But books are books, as I said before. Now, there's nothing in diamonds."

"There is in travelling," said Juliet again.

"Yes, there is. But the books show a higher aspiration, Miss Bracebridge."

"I don't see it," said the young lady, pouting.

"Well, when you are judge, you'll know how easy it is," said Norton. "After all, it's only a game. Go ahead, David."

"Ben Johnson. Goes supercargo to China. Object, to do nothing, and smoke seventy cigars a day."

"Roswell has it yet," said Norton. "Go ahead."

"Lucy Ellis. Great beauty. Loves to have all men look at her."

"Roswell has it!" cried Norton. "No, stop. Go on."

"Matilda Laval. Has a medicine for all ills; and she lives to cure people."

"Matilda has it," said Norton, in a somewhat lowered tone.

"Bill Langridge. Governor of the State. Object, to have things his own way."

"Matilda has it!" said the judge, judicially.

"Egbert Watson—prefers military to civil rule; therefore chooses to be head of the army instead of the State. Object, same as Bill Langridge's."

"Matilda Laval has it," said the judge. He began somehow to look gloomy.

"Elisha Peters—has freedom to go through the world on foot. Object, is to see everything."

"Matilda Laval has it!" growled the judge.

"Dick Morton. His capital is rifles, with powder and ball; object in life, to kill or to hunt and eat wild beasts."

"Don't come near Matilda Laval's," said the judge.

"Julia Simpson has no object."

"Easy disposed of," said Norton.

"Ned Forsyth agrees with Watson; Mary Fortescue sides with Lucy Ellis; and half a dozen more with Lucy, Roswell Holt, Bill, and Miss Bracebridge."

"Then there's only you," said Norton, gloomily.

"David Bartholomew. Capital, himself and all he has, to be made the most of. Business, to use it all for the King whose servant I am."

"What's the interest?" growled Norton, after a moment's pause. "But stop! how are you going to use it? you don't tell your business after all. What are you going to do?"

"I don't know," said David. "The King's will, whatever that is. Whatever He gives me to do."

"The interest?"

"That comes all along the way," said David. "But at the end—I shall inherit all things!"

"Is that a proper way of speaking, David?" said Esther, gravely.

"That's a promise," said David.

"He's an old prig, that's what he is!" said one of the boys.

"No," said David, "stop! hear me; you don't understand. In that day the King will take account of His servants. And to those who can say to Him, 'Lord, Thy pound hath gained ten pounds'—or 'five pounds'—He will say, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things; I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.' I want that."

Something about the manner of David's speech stilled the impatient little company. David was always much looked up to and somewhat feared; and now he had spoken with a clear and sweet business tone which left no hold for ridicule. Nobody attempted it; and Judy saw her time was not then, and kept silence. So did the judge; too long, some of them thought.

"I suppose Matilda and you are in the same box," he began, "and what I give to one of you I must give to the other."

"No, no, you musn't!" was cried in a stream of little voices. "They didn't say the same thing at all; you must judge by what they said."

"They both *meant* the same thing, I know," said Norton; "but if I must go by what they *said*, then David spoke more clearly than Matilda. Bartholomew has it."

"Reasons! reasons!" cried Judy and one or two more; for it was usual for the judge to fortify himself thus in the opinions of his little assembly.

"Well," said Norton, without his usual readiness, "the reasons are plain enough. The best business is what yields the best interest; and you may judge yourselves, if working for other people isn't nobler than working for one's self. And as to the interest,—well, you know,—if you come to look at it," Norton went on not very lucidly—*that's* better than *this*."

"What's better than which?" said Judy.

"Come, Judy," said her brother; "what will last is better than what won't last; and all your diamonds cannot compare with 'shining as the stars for ever and ever'; and

the King's court will be better than any little king's or queen's rule in this world."

There was a general cry now for the forfeits. It fell to David by right to dispense them. I have not time to tell how witty and how pleasant they were; but only that they brought every one into good humour long before the game was out.

The little party slept at the house, and returned to town by an early train next morning.

"David," said Matilda, catching him a moment by himself after they got home,—"don't you think Norton is coming round?" She spoke eagerly, anxiously, almost exultingly.

"Give him time, Tilly," said David, smiling. "He rather committed himself last night, I think he will."

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